

Weber Writes 2015

Editors: Sylvia Newman and José Otero
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Printed in the United States of America by Weber State
University Printing Services, Ogden, Utah.

Cover: Polk, Michael R. “View showing portion of west side
bridge, looking east—Ogden River Bridge Spanning Ogden
River at Washington Boulevard, Ogden, Weber County, UT.”
Historic Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering
Record/Historic American Landscape Survey Collection,
1991. From Prints and Photographs Division, Library of
Congress (HAER UT,29-OGDEN,4—4). Web. 7 July 2015.

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Foreword

We are extremely excited to bring forward this issue of *Weber Writes*. In doing so, we pay tribute to Dr. Scott Rogers, who stepped down this year as the composition director and editor of *Weber Writes*. This publication was his idea and his “baby,” and we thank him for his vision and hard work. This issue also marks the fifth edition of *Weber Writes*, a milestone of which we are very proud.

The essays contained herein were written by students enrolled in Weber State University’s college writing program during the academic year 2014-2015, chosen because of their originality, depth, insight and/or complexity.

We have continued our tradition, established in our first edition, of not breaking the essays into genres or categories; they are simply presented in alphabetical order by author. We have also attempted to bring all citations and works cited pages into conformity with MLA and APA styles. We have otherwise edited with a light touch, leaving the essays as close to the originals as possible.

In addition to recognizing exemplary writing, this anthology provides models of good writing to students in the upcoming academic year. Over 1,000 copies of *Weber Writes* will be printed and purchased by college writing students, and the authors contained herein should feel proud to know that their writing will be an inspiration for many of their fellow students. They have already been an inspiration to us.

To current English 1010/2010 students, if you have a paper you would like to submit to next year’s edition of *Weber Writes*, please let your instructor know.

Sylvia Newman, director of college writing
José Otero, assistant director of college writing

Hanah Anderson
English 1010

To C or Not to C

In the United States today, approximately one in three women give birth by unnecessary Cesarean section. The optimal national average of Cesarean sections administered is 4 to 6 percent. In 1965 the average percentage of Cesarean sections was at 4.5 percent, a perfect range. As of 2010, the rate of Cesarean sections has increased to 32.8 percent. This is an astounding increase by any means. Although Cesarean sections are common, they can be accompanied with infections, increased bleeding, and blood clots—not exactly what you want as a new mother.

After realizing the sheer increase in numbers of C-sections in the United States, many ask the question, why? The increase in C-sections is due to the increase in obstetrician-mediated child birthing; in other words, women are giving birth at hospitals with physicians. With hospitals readily equipped with operating rooms and drugs, the majority of physicians will “opt out” of pushing women through natural labor; instead they will perform unnecessary C-sections with long- and short-term deleterious effects. In order to reduce the rate of C-sections in the US, midwifery is being integrated into the healthcare norms.

Midwifery is a new, although historically old, practice of child birthing assistance. A midwife, or certified nurse midwife, is a college graduate with a nursing degree, who acquires skills through apprenticeship; midwives are not physicians, and do not operate in hospital settings. In this literature review, I will illustrate the positive benefits of midwifery integration into the healthcare system, including safety benefits, cost-effectiveness, and the congenial atmosphere of midwife-run institutions.

In Susan Stapleton's article “New Study Shows Midwife-led Birth Centers Improve Outcomes and Lower Healthcare Costs,” the author describes the possible safety benefits of choosing a midwife as a maternal care provider.

Stapleton uses a recent study, “National Birth Center Study II,” to support her argument. According to the study, which included 15,500 women receiving care in 79 midwife-led birth centers in 33 US states, only one in sixteen (6 percent) required a Cesarean section. In contrast to the optimal average of Cesarean sections in women choosing midwife-led care, the study found that nearly one in four women (24 percent), with similarly low-risk pregnancies, but who chose a physician-run hospitalized setting, required a C-section. Dr. Cara Osborne, SD, MSN, CNM and professor at the University of Arkansas' Eleanor Mann School of Nursing, states, “A growing body of evidence, including findings from The National Birth Center Study II, continues to demonstrate that women who give birth at midwife-led birth centers experience exceptional outcomes and are less likely to undergo Cesarean birth compared to those who give birth in hospitals.” In Stapleton's opinion, with the utilization of midwife-led birth centers, more women will be able to have natural births rather than C-sections. Because of the decrease in C-sections exhibited with midwifery care, Stapleton concludes that midwifery is a safer maternal provider choice for expecting mothers.

Akin to Stapleton's views on the safety benefits of midwifery, Rachel Walden, a writer for “Our Bodies Ourselves,” a healthcare information blog, agrees with Stapleton's claims and also embellishes new safety positives of midwifery care. In her article “Cochrane Review: The Safety and Benefits of Midwives Overseeing Maternity Care,” Walden summarizes a recent review administered by The Cochrane Collaboration. The Cochrane Collaboration is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organization. According to the review, midwife-led community models of care were associated with benefits, including “a decrease likelihood of episiotomy or instrumental birth, and decreased likelihood of preterm labor or loss of fetus before 24 weeks' gestation.” Following further research, the review found that women choosing midwife maternal care were more likely to experience

spontaneous vaginal birth. Because of the decrease in instrument-assisted births and the increased rate of natural births, The Cochrane Collaboration's Review of midwifery care deemed midwife maternal care a safer choice compared to physician-led hospitalized childbirth. Based on this, Walden concludes her article by stating, "More women with low-risk pregnancies should be given the option of midwifery-led care."

While some advocate the safety of midwife-led care, Rachel Zimmerman, a writer for WBUR's Common Health Reform and Reality, endorses the cost-efficiency associated with choosing a midwife as a maternal care provider. In her article, "Midwives: A Safe, Cost-Saving Alternative," Zimmerman discusses the outrageous costs of hospital stays and C-sections. According to Zimmerman, there were 26,141 C-sections performed in Massachusetts out of 77,570 births in 2006. If this number was reduced by 1 percent, \$1.5 million would be saved. Zimmerman quotes Jeffery Thompson, MD, MPH, and the Chief Medical Officer for Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, who states, "Midwives have directly saved the State of Washington at least \$470,000 per biennium in cost-offsets to Medicaid when women give birth at home or in free-standing birth centers." These numbers do not include medical procedures such as epidurals or continuous electronic fetal monitoring; if these are integrated, the savings would be approximately \$3.1 million. Zimmerman urges us to keep in mind these savings occur with licensed midwives attending just under 2 percent of births. With this evidence Zimmerman suggests the great financial savings that could be accrued with the integration of more midwife-led birth centers.

Nina Lincoff, a writer for Health Line News, is in agreement with Zimmerman's views on the cost-effectiveness of midwifery care. In her article "Personal Midwife Care Decreases the Cost of Pregnancy," Lincoff discusses a caseload study administered at the University of Sydney in Australia, where nearly 2,000 mothers-to-be were

paired with a personal midwife to accompany them through their pregnancy and eventually labor. The case study showed that these women were “less likely to have a Cesarean section, and less likely to have an epidural for pain management.” Because of the decrease in birthing complications and additive measures, the women were not required to have as lengthy of a stay in the hospital or birthing center; because of this, the women in the case study saved on average \$536.25. Lincoff quotes Sally Tracy, MD, a professor of midwifery at the University of Sydney in Australia and one of the head researchers in the case study, who states, “In today's health care climate—especially in the United States—more specialized care just sounds like more money out of your wallet. But because caseload midwifery was found to reduce hospital stays and the likelihood of elective Cesarean sections, the actual cost is lower.” Based on the case study in Australia, Lincoff is inclined to promote the cost-effectiveness of midwifery maternal care.

Along with the other relatively tangible benefits of midwifery, the last benefit is more emotionally based. There are many who, along with the other benefits, advocate for the greater personable nature of midwives. Joanne Gray, a writer for the Australian College of Midwives, wrote the article “Know Your Midwife: The Benefits of Continuity of Care” in order to apprise mothers of the benefits of the close more personable relationships associated with choosing a midwife. According to Gray, midwifery care provides a developed relationship between midwife and mother. This relationship has been connected to the decrease in admissions to neonatal intense care units (NICU).

Along with the benefits for the child, mothers choosing midwifery care have reported that they coped better physically and emotionally postpartum because of the continued individualized personal care provided. Gray discusses a review of midwifery continuity of care models done by the Cochrane Library. Out of 13 trials involving over 16,000 women, the women in the midwifery-led care

groups were “more likely to feel in control during labor and birth and commenced breastfeeding earlier than women who had other maternal methods of care.” In Gray's opinion, the decrease in time it takes for breastfeeding to initiate and the heightened sense of control originate from the close bond made between mom and midwife, which is not typically acquired through an obstetric physician.

Colleen Donovan-Batson, a writer for Midwives Alliance North America, agrees with Gray that midwives being more personable, which leads to greater outcomes for birth. Donovan-Batson wrote the article “Midwifery Model” to illustrate the personable nature and women-centered approach to midwifery. Donovan-Batson describes midwifery as “nurturing hands-on care before, during, and after birth.” Midwifery is the preferred form of maternal care because of the greater communication between provider and patient, along with understanding and shared decision-making. According to Donovan-Batson, midwives should be the maternal care providers of choice because their care does not cease after labor and birth. Because midwifery care is modeled around continued care postpartum, meaning continued check-ups for mom and baby after birth, it creates a strong bond between midwife and mother. Donovan-Batson states why midwifery should be the maternal care choice by stating, “What women love is that there is more to maternity care with a midwife than checking blood pressure, fundal height, weight and urine checks. [With a midwife] you will see a familiar face at each of your appointments, and you will be given adequate time to ask questions and address your concerns.” These qualities are different from that of a normal obstetric physician who, in many cases, has to be with another mother directly after an appointment or, in some cases, doesn't make the appointment at all and has an on-call doctor pick up the appointment. Donovan-Batson advocates for the greater integration of midwifery into the healthcare norms because of its greater personable nature. With the closer, more trusting relationship exemplified between mother and

midwife, more women will have confident, supported labor and birth.

The authors recently discussed all endorse the positive benefits of choosing a midwife as a maternal care provider. While some believe midwifery is a great choice because of the improved safety outcomes, others believe midwifery care should be chosen because of cost savings, or the more caring fundamentals. Whether the authors endorse midwifery care because of its increased safety, cost-effectiveness, or congenial characteristics, they all urge the integration of midwives into healthcare norms. All of these authors are in agreement with one another that a woman's choice of care should be a midwife based on case studies and reviews.

To further improve the results of these studies, I would suggest only incorporating women who have had both obstetric and midwife-led births into a study—for instance, a woman who had her first child with the assistance of an obstetrician and her second with a midwife, or vice versa. With the narrower sample of women who have experienced both, it would make the comparisons of which maternal care provider is safer or less expensive more clear, as well as indicate which provider did the mothers form a more trusting relationship with. Another suggestion is to integrate other maternal care provider choices, such as a doula, or no provider at all. With grouping findings from all different types of care, the study's outcomes would be clearer as to which to choose.

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Marta Constanza Alvear Bravo
English 2010

The News without Investigative Journalism

Investigative journalism is a branch of traditional journalism in which reporters investigate a subject thoroughly before releasing a report on an original story. Investigative journalists use many resources in order to determine that the information being told is truthful. In his collection of essays *Liberty and the News*, Pulitzer Prize winner Walter Lippmann stated, "There can be no higher law in journalism than to tell the truth and shame the devil" (13). Lippman points out that reporters have a moral challenge to expose the truth through their stories. In some cases, this pursuit may include traveling to remote, dangerous locations to gather information on the subject. Investigative journalism is a difficult and time-consuming profession. Often, subjects covered by investigative journalists are delicate, such as armed conflicts, political corruption, and organized crime. The information gathering and follow-through for stories involving controversial subjects like these may take a very long time, varying from a couple of weeks to a few years.

Fact checkers are other professionals who are in charge of confirming the veracity of reported stories. However, unlike investigative journalists, fact checkers do not create original content; they just verify stories that have already been told by someone else. With the spread of the internet, it is harder and harder to know if a story is real or a hoax and, as a consequence, fact checking has become vital in unraveling the truth. Fact checking is a profession that involves a great deal of responsibility because if there is a mistake in a story, the company will not make the writer or the editor responsible for the error; the error will be attributed to the fact checker. Peter Canby, author of the article "Fact-checking at *The New Yorker*," claims, "In the department, we refer to that as the Shoot-the-Fact-Checker Syndrome, which is one of our occupational hazards."

Canby notes that fact checkers are held accountable for what they check; therefore, they have to do their work in the best way possible to avoid making mistakes.

Despite the importance of investigative journalists and fact checkers, their role in media is changing. This paper will explore the impact that these professionals have in the way the news is reported, discuss how technology is modifying the platforms used to consume media, and how the internet is making journalism more ad-revenue centered and less content centered and, finally, the effects that all of these changes have on the consumer. I argue that these shifts in journalism are not in the best interest of the consumer because investigative journalism and fact checking are essential for developing credible reports.

There is an ongoing debate in news media about whether to prioritize the speed in which a story gets released or to spend more time working on the report in order to check the facts told in such stories. Unfortunately, it is not possible to do both because fact checking a story takes a considerable amount of time. More important, it is not only the media that must choose between these two options, but also the consumers, when making the decision about which media they will choose as their primary news source. Eric Newton, senior advisor to the president at the Knight Foundation and former managing editor of the Newseum, said, “We get the media we deserve, but over time, we all come to see that people want to know something that is true” (qtd. in Fisher). With infinite amounts of information all over the web, people are starting to value the accuracy and truthfulness of the news they read because internet users do not want to waste their time reading false stories. In addition, when social media users share a link to a story, they want to make sure that the information shared is true; otherwise, it might reflect poorly on themselves as well. They do not want to share a false story and then be seen as naïve or as a liar by their online friends.

Investigative journalists have the task of putting together truthful articles. Companies are interested in

having their readers click on their pages and also stay on them for a certain amount of time because these companies make money from the visualization of advertisements on their page. If a person stays a long time on a page of interest, they are more likely to click on an advertisement than if they were only to stay on the page for a short period of time. They are also more likely to click on an advertisement if they visit the page frequently. Tony Haile, author of the article “What You Think You Know About the Web Is Wrong,” observes the importance of having an audience that returns to the website. To demonstrate why it is important to captivate the audience with interesting articles that maintain their attention long enough, Haile discusses studies which show that serious news articles engage readers more than trivial news stories. According to Haile, the data gathered proved that:

Articles that were clicked on and engaged with tended to be actual news . . . the best performers were Obamacare, Edward Snowden, Syria and George Zimmerman. The most clicked on but least deeply engaged-with articles had topics that were more generic . . . the worst performers included Top, Best, Biggest, Fictional etc.

Through this information, Haile illustrates that if a story is “actual news” and, therefore, well developed and supported by investigation through solid sources, people are more likely to read such an article as opposed to “more generic topics,” such as lists that rank the best vacation spots, the top ten restaurants of a city, or the richest celebrities.

In the era of immediacy, internet users do not like to waste their time. Haile explains the value of time in the eyes of internet users:

Time is a rare scarce resource on the web and we spend more of our time with good content than with bad. Valuing advertising on time and attention means that publishers of great content can charge more for their ads than those who create link bait. If the amount of money you can charge is directly

correlated with the quality of content on the page, then media sites are financially incentivized to create better quality content . . . we might finally have found a sustainable business model for quality on the web.

Haile argues that if websites publish truthful, quality content, online users will be satisfied and will probably come back to that page in the future. The trust relationship that online users establish with a website can translate into profits for the website company. TV news channels, however, are losing some of their former loyal customers because people feel that they do not have the time to watch TV all day while waiting for updates on the news of their interest.

Viewers are trading their news sources for other kinds of media that can provide them customized updates, such as the internet or apps in their smartphones. More and more people are opting out of getting their news from television news channels and, instead, choosing to get their news updates from mobile devices because they are an immediate source of information. Twenty-four-hour news channels, which are the TV channels dedicated exclusively to broadcasting news all day long, invest their resources in maintaining the structure of their channel, which is very costly. They have to pay multiple shifts of cast and crew in order to broadcast news all day. Nevertheless, there is rarely breaking news which requires all the team to be reporting live. Sambrook and McGuire, authors of the article “Have 24-hour TV News Channels Had Their Day?” claim that “newsgathering becomes a sausage machine, dedicated to filling airtime. Hours a day are spent on live feeds waiting for something, anything, to happen.” The authors further explain that the practice of “filling airtime” is known in the news reporting business as “vamping.” They also argue that “one of the lost opportunities of all that airtime is coverage of under-reported places or issues or providing more analysis or depth. The reason is that all the resources are tied up, waiting to go live” (Sambrook and McGuire).

Therefore, instead of TV channels spending financial resources filling air time, they could be well spent in other areas, for instance, in investigative journalism or fact checking.

In addition, there are very few stories that actually happen live. As a matter of fact, some news reports would be told in a more effective way when the stories are not live. Sambrook and McGuire discuss the kinds of stories that are better told when they are not broadcast live: “Many stories—the economy, climate change—aren't best served by pictures; others (inside Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan or Zimbabwe) often don't have pictures available until days after the event; many more work better with a well-crafted, tightly edited package rather than a live feed.” These authors argue that reporting live does not give the channels the opportunity to research or fact check what is being reported, which may lead to inaccuracies or incomplete information in the stories. Consequently, all of this investment may be a waste of resources that could be used for much better purposes inside the news channel.

There are still companies that prioritize investigative journalism. For instance, the renowned journalistic magazine *The New Yorker* “still employs full-time fact checkers to verify every assertion in each piece” (Fisher). This magazine believes that verifying the truth in their stories is a key component to their journalistic efforts. On the other hand, some news giants like CNN shut down their entire investigative journalism department. On *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, the journalist John Oliver looks into the reasons why this has happened. John Oliver spoke to the professional media analyst Brad Adgate who argues that investigative journalism is not profitable. Brad states, “There are a lot of good stories out there that . . . we will never know.” He explains that because investigative journalism is so costly, TV channels prefer not to invest in it anymore, so these stories will simply never reach the viewers. However, Kaj Larsen, a famous investigative journalist, who previously worked for CNN, has a different

point of view on the matter: “If you [want to] know what’s going on in the world, you actually have to get out into the world. You can’t do it from behind a desk.” Some stories can only be told if a reporter travels to the location, especially in remote areas where people do not have access to resources that help them keep in touch with the world.

Nevertheless, CNN is not the only company to lay off their investigative journalists; it is a trend that is happening throughout the country. The American Society of News Editors analyzes the decline of investigative journalists hired by companies: “Approximately 5,900 positions were eliminated during 2008, and 5,200 full-time newsroom positions were eliminated in 2009. This means the total employment in American print newsrooms has dropped by around 14,900 since 2000.” Although The American Society of News Editors admits that it is difficult to know the exact number of newsroom position layoffs that corresponded exclusively to investigative journalists, these statistics clearly show the decrease of journalism professionals. As a result, the news being reported is changing to more trivial content.

Both *The New Yorker* and CNN are considered to be serious sources for news, but we can observe that they decided to go in opposite directions regarding their investigative journalism department policies. Some companies believe that investigative journalism is worth the investment, while others do not see it as necessary anymore. According to Marc Fisher, author of the article “Who Cares if it’s True?” there should be a balance concerning the level of perfectionism in journalism. Fisher states, “It’s about finding the right middle point. Some degree of perfectionism turns out to be good for business, and absolute perfectionism can prevent great journalism from ever happening at all.” Fisher acknowledges that fact checking is important; however, he argues that “perfectionism” has a harmful effect on journalism because a story can rarely be fully confirmed.

Having an investigative journalism or fact checking department in a company is not cheap, so many companies are opting to get rid of them. Now This News does not to employ fact checkers. “[Now This produces] 40 to 50 videos a day, almost all of them based on network, wire, and viral content. They marry a few seconds from this source with a few seconds from that one and send it out” (Hemmerle). Now This News’ president Sean Mills says that the resources to check everything do not exist, but the answer lies in transparency: “If you don’t know, just say you couldn’t verify it.” Mills’ position is to publish stories without checking the facts in them but, at the same time, disclose their process to the readers.

Even though investigative journalism or fact checking cannot guarantee that a report is 100 percent true, it is still essential to consolidate the credibility of a news source. I disagree with Mills’ position because it is not only important to know if a story is true or not, but also to get news from a source that the consumer can trust. On the other hand, I agree with Larsen’s point of view. Unless a reporter goes to the location itself to gain information, people may never know the stories of those who do not have the power to voice their problems.

Without fact checking, it is hard to know the full unbiased story, and without investigative journalism, news audiences may only have access to stories that are within their reach. Thus, stories that are unheard of will simply remain that way. The story of the journalist Wilfred Burchett is an example of how investigative journalism can expose the unheard realities of people. Burchett was the first correspondent in Hiroshima, Japan, after the atomic bomb was dropped in 1945 (Pilger 10-25). In his article “The Atomic Plague,” he was able to show the world the struggles the Japanese people were facing that the world was blind to at the time. Nevertheless, he was only able to report on this subject because he went to this remote location behind enemy lines to discover the truth of what was happening. No one else in the world knew the horrible

consequences of the atomic bomb at that point in time, and the world was able to open their eyes, thanks to his investigative journalism.

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Seneca Corsetti
English 2010

From the Circus to the Big Screen

Being a Little Person with diastrophic dwarfism, I experience the media's depictions of dwarfs regularly. Though the media has an indirect effect on my daily life, I can see its influence in the way I am treated by strangers. I see myself as a productive member of society aiming to become a professional in my chosen field, yet the stereotypes of little people being performers are at the forefront of many people's minds when I meet them, and especially when I am in a public setting with other Little People.

Many with dwarfism would agree that they experience discrimination both socially and in the workplace due to existing perceptions of those with dwarfism. This includes an example given by former commissioner of the Equal Economic Opportunity Commission Paul Miller, a man with dwarfism. Miller graduated from Harvard Law School and began his search for the perfect job to which he could apply his new credentials. He was shocked to see his underachieving classmates receive job offers daily while he received multiple rejections per day after interviewing for countless positions. A particular law firm Miller applied to told him they could not hire him because they feared clients would think they were running "a circus freak show" (49). The roles that Little People have always played clearly still have an effect on professional and social perceptions.

Little People of America (LPA) is an organization founded by dwarf actor Billy Barty in 1957, whose members are either dwarfs or people who have been in some way affected by dwarfism. With over 6,000 members, LPA stands as the largest organization devoted to the cause of dwarfism. The goal of the organization is to "offer the support and resources necessary to empower all people with dwarfism to reach their full potential" (Arnold). In doing this, LPA often fights for the accurate portrayal of people

with dwarfism in the entertainment industry. A 2003 survey put out by LPA about employment of their members yielded the most complete vocational statistics for people with dwarfism so far. The results were that many Little People were employed in some type of profession. Represented were a number of physicians, teachers, social workers, engineers, etc. A good representation of all available jobs to any member of the public was seen. The survey showed that only about 8 percent of those with dwarfism worked in some form of entertainment full time. This is a remarkable improvement compared to jobs available to dwarfs in past years when almost all worked in entertainment. Yet the perceptions of Little People still persist. They are seen as subhuman entertainers, and major television shows and film are to blame (Adelson).

Objectifying Little People is seen in many different places in the media, and certain roles little people play may be damaging to the people with dwarfism as a whole. What we want to understand is what roles are destructive to this unique community and which are acceptable.

A consensus seems to be that roles that support stereotypes of dwarfism are damaging to Little People, and these stereotypes are rooted so deeply into our history that it is very difficult to change the minds of media consumers. People with dwarfism have worked in the entertainment industry almost as long as there have been dwarfs in the world. Little People have been seen in forms of ancient art and entertainment. They have been depicted in the art of ancient Egypt, China, the Americas, etc. The roles they played during these times were better described as glorified pets than actual people (Adelson). Forms of this exploitation still exist today. We have entertainment platforms that depict maltreatment and even abuse of those with dwarfism for comic purposes, including the Golden Globe Award Winning television show *Boardwalk Empire* where Little People are forced to wrestle for entertainment.

Boardwalk Empire was set in the Prohibition era. The data regarding Little People during this time are highly

consistent with the depiction in the series. According to journalists Walter Bodin and Barnet Hurshey's 1934 book *It's a Small World: All About Midgets*, in the 1930s the vast majority of those with dwarfism were unemployed, and those who were employed worked in the entertainment industry, typically the circus, wrestling, etc. Bodin and Hurshey state,

What are they to do with their lives? Their choice is decidedly limited. Unlike normal children, they cannot plan careers at will. Innumerable doors are closed to them. They cannot be aviators, policemen, electricians, chefs, laborers, bus-drivers, and clerks. The professions are closed to them. A doctor, a lawyer, a schoolteacher no smaller than a small child, would not only be laughed out of countenance, but would probably starve to death. (89-90)

Little People still fight a form of this perception today, as the draw of most TV shows that depict Little People is the “freak show” quality of the actors. Consider the new show on Lifetime *Little Women LA* starring six dwarf women living in Los Angeles. While the women are depicted as women who live their own lives in a big city, most of them have jobs in some form of entertainment. They are shown in strip clubs, promiscuous music videos, etc. This is not to give dwarf women a kind of allure; rather the pull of this dramatic show has a sideshow quality much like the entertainment in the 1930s.

A more recent example of this form of exploitation can be taken from the major film *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Set in the 1990s, the show demonstrates that misrepresentation of those with dwarfism is still prevalent. The movie shows a scene in which Wall Street professionals are planning a “dwarf tossing” office event. The issue at hand was that they wanted to avoid any possible legal issues for putting on such an event. During the meeting, a business representative's pitch goes as follows, “I say we stick with

the loophole. If we don't consider him a human, if we consider it an act, I think we're in the clear." This act of dehumanization actually occurred during the 1990s. The rationale behind the abuse given in the quotation exemplifies the root of our problem.

On the other hand, we have forms of television that attempt to shine a positive light on dwarfism; the goal of some shows is to help tear down the stereotypes previously set in place. *The Little Couple*, a show starring Dr. Jen Arnold, her husband, Bill Klein, and their children, is widely accepted as a favorable depiction of dwarfism. This is because the characters are depicted as being human, like any other members of society. Dr. Arnold, a neonatologist, is an educated professional in her field and shown this way. She and her husband are shown buying a home, moving to a new city, and adopting children. These are things that would make an audience see them as normal and admirable. The show also does a wonderful job of putting a positive light on overcoming trials without singling out the dwarf community as being helpless. They show the struggles unique to living a life in a world built for taller people, yet do not use this as a platform for pity.

Fight Back is a television show starring five men with dwarfism who are depicted as the heroes of justice. This television show is still in prototype form as it was filmed in the summer of 2014. *Fight Back* actor Beau Ginn, who plays Sledge in the series, describes the show as attempting to break down negative stereotypes placed on people with dwarfism. He stated, "The show emphasizes the question, 'why does the hero have to be a larger-than-life superman? Why can't the hero of the story be a dwarf?' That's what I love about the show; we're the heroes of our own story." Ginn believes that the television industry should use Little People in this way, showing that they are not just regular people, but also extraordinary people. He holds the view that any other depictions simply add "fuel to an existing fire." Ginn describes a scene mentioned earlier in *Boardwalk Empire*, saying, "the characters in this role are far from 'the

heroes in their own story;’ rather they exist purely for comic entertainment.”

Roles that perpetuate the idea that Little People are subhuman have an extremely damaging effect in the daily lives of those with dwarfism. These roles will add to the negative perception of those with dwarfism and reinforce stereotypes of dwarfs being incoherent performers with no choice but to exploit themselves to earn a living. Acceptable and positive roles for those with dwarfism are those that create the idea that the character is a person, entailing that they have occupations, relationships, goals, ideas, etc. As roles Little People play in the entertainment industry become more positive and negative representations become fewer, we can reverse the stereotypes of people with dwarfism, leading to a better social and occupational life for Little People.

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Rape Culture: What Is It and Why Is It a Problem?

According to the US Department of Justice's National Crime Victimization Survey, there is an average of 293,000 victims (age 12 or older) of rape and sexual assault each year, and every 107 seconds another American is sexually assaulted. Additionally, 68 percent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police and 98 percent of rapists will never spend a day in jail or prison (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, 2013). According to the statistics, we're making the world safer for rapists, a world where it is more shameful to be raped than to be a rapist (Valenti, 2013). Rape and sexual assault are the most underreported crimes in the world because of feelings of shame, fear of not being believed or being accused of playing a role in the crime, and/or lack of trust in the criminal justice system (National Institute of Justice, 2010). Reasons vary among raped individuals, and less than half of all rapes are actually reported. So, why do the numbers and statistics weigh against each other? It may be because of rape culture.

“Rape culture” is a term used to describe how rape and other acts of sexual violence are considered the norm in a society. The term was coined by feminists in the 1970s and was generally applied to contemporary American culture as a whole. The word “culture” paired with a word like “rape” shows that the connotations attached to the term support a society where people think it's acceptable to use sexual violence to get what they want, and sexual violence, usually against women, is normalized, excused, and trivialized in the media and popular culture. Through the frequent use and examples of the term being used in mass media and public conversation, we have been taught to accept rape as something that is just simply part of life. We are surrounded with language and images that perpetuate rape—such as music lyrics, social media, movies, and advertisements—with people partaking in the rape culture

without realizing it. The rape culture in the United States needs to be acknowledged as an epidemic because rape includes a variety of issues from the way victims of rape are silenced to the way raped individuals are portrayed in fiction and by the media. We need a revolution of values and resistance rather than rape being extensive and normalized due to societal beliefs about gender and sexuality. In order to combat rape culture in the United States and in the media, people need to stop sexual objectification—especially in women's appearances, declare action when witnessing potentially threatening situations or sexist language, redefine and reshape masculinity, and get more serious and positive about affirmative consent.

Sexual objectification usually involves a woman being viewed as a sex object, one that serves another's sexual pleasure. We see it in the media, literature, and popular culture. Examples of females being viewed as an object of sexual pleasure can be found in advertisements—such as using a woman's body to sell a product like alcohol or a variety of male and even female products. These advertisements usually include an image of a half-naked woman not showing a face or a name attached to her body. Sexual objectification is the concept of not viewing a person as a whole; her appearance is perceived as an object of sexual desire, and this is usually found among men's desires and observations towards women.

The objectification of a woman's appearance fuels rape myths in rape culture. In Martha Burt's article titled “Cultural Myths and Supports for Rape” (1980), she examines the acceptance of rape myths and the refusal of acknowledging the abuse of certain forms of sexual violence. Burt gives examples of common rape myths told by the media and even by rapists. The most common rape myths are the ones that involve objectifying a woman's body: “When a woman dresses provocatively, she's asking for trouble,” “Rape only happens to young, 'attractive' women,” and “Women incite men to rape by the way they dress, their body language, and their actions.” Burt

demonstrates that even those who have personally experienced rape may still continue to believe and accept these rape myths.

In order to combat rape culture, people need to stop viewing women as objects of sexual pleasure. Sexual objectification influences both men and women to contribute to the normalization of this concept because females tend to obsess over how they look, and their appearance becomes so important to them that it leads men to value their overall appearance and nothing else. The process of treating and/or viewing a woman as a sexual object rather than as a whole person can lead to negative psychological effects such as depression, eating disorders, and sexual malfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Sexual objectification is degrading because personality traits, emotional attachment, and intellectual abilities are neglected. Women cannot be fulfilled in a culture where sexual objectification is normalized.

Another important thing people can do to combat rape culture is to declare action when witnessing potentially threatening situations or sexist language. Don't contribute to victim-blaming. The term victim-blaming can be defined as "putting blame for the occurrence of a traumatizing event on the survivor instead of blaming the perpetrator" (Humboldt State University's Sexual Assault Prevention Committee, n.d.). Victim-blaming makes it difficult for a victim/survivor to come forward and report abuse, and that's why rape and sexual assault are the most underreported crimes in the world. Victim-blaming can lead to shaming victims. Jessica Valenti (2013), *Nation* contributor, feminist, and editor of the award-winning anthology *Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and A World Without Rape*, claims that the rape culture in the United States focuses on how it is more shameful to be raped than to be a rapist. Our society makes it uncomplicated for rapists to get away with rape since the rape culture in the United States normalizes acts of sexual violence, usually against women. Individual survivors, most

often female survivors, are generally ignored and muted before, during, and after the experience of rape by both men and women who contribute to victim-blaming and shaming (Burnett et al., 2009). Valenti believes that the dehumanizing effects of labeling victims of rape as “sluts” leads to a culture that sympathizes with rapists rather than decreasing the stigma surrounding sexual assault.

People contribute to victim-blaming/shaming because they can see the victim/survivor as different from themselves (Center For Relationship Abuse Awareness, 2015). With that being said, people blaming/shaming victims of rape feel that they have more control over their lives than the victims who were not in control during a potentially traumatizing situation. It is best not to react in a shameful or blameful manner towards victims/survivors because this is not a helpful reaction. In order to avoid victim-blaming/shaming, declare action by acknowledging that survivors are their own best experts and provide them with resources and support (Center For Relationship Abuse Awareness, 2015).

In addition, in order to declare action toward these problems, we need to understand the real issues behind rape and sexual assault. In Jackson Katz's (2006) book titled *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men Can Help*, the author explains why sexual violence against women isn't just a women's issue, it is a societal issue. In fact, Katz claims that it is more of a men's issue because males tend to contribute to the normalization of sexual violence against women by participating in sexist practices and even rape jokes. From this aspect, he encourages all men to take a stand against violence among women by advising them about the “bystander approach,” an approach that inspires the public to take control of sexual violence as a problem, and challenge victim-blaming statements when they hear them.

Furthermore, males tend to pose a threat because their masculinity causes them to exploit a rape culture. In Owen Jones' (1999) article titled “Sex, Culture, and the

Biology of Rape: Toward Explanation and Prevention,” he states that rape isn't just about sex for males; it's about power; and it is time to redefine and reshape masculinity in a culture that perpetuates other acts of sexual violence and rape, usually against women. Masculinity is generally defined as a man having dominance, power, and control.

Anthropologist Peggy Reeves Sanday studies both rape-free and rape-prone societies and talks about how rape-free societies support the ceremonial importance of women, while in rape-prone societies “social relations were marked by interpersonal violence in conjunction with an ideology of male dominance enforced through the control and subordination of women” (Sanday, 1996). The sexual hostility towards women in a subculture is deeply entrenched by “toxic masculinity” (Friedman, 2013).

Most reported rape cases are associated with violence toward and humiliation of female victims and survivors. Take the Steubenville Ohio rape case for example. On August 11, 2012, an unconscious teenaged girl was raped by two boys from Steubenville High School at a party that involved underage drinking and drugs. The victim was publicly humiliated and was sexually assaulted by students, several of whom documented the acts on social media (Almasy, 2013). The two boys laughed at the victim's unconscious body and took advantage of her that night. The leading roles played by the two boys showed that they had an uncontrollable dominance over the girl's body. This is a problem we need to confront because we need to reshape and redefine masculinity in our culture by developing a role where men can prevent sexual assault against women. Redefining and reshaping masculinity is key to stopping rape culture. And in order to redefine the attributes associated with masculinity, we need to embrace honesty and other important values and aspects that don't involve the domination of males over females. Having values other than dominance, power, and control can influence men and foster sexual equality in American culture (Sanday, 1996).

Redefining and reshaping masculinity can also decrease the stigma surrounding sexual assault.

Additionally, in order to combat rape culture, people need to learn about consent and how to be more serious and positive about affirmative consent. Consent is defined as “a mutual verbal, physical, and emotional agreement that happens without manipulation, threats, or head games” (Yes Means Yes, 2015). People need to take responsibility for knowing what's acceptable between them and their partners because affirmative consent can prevent sexual violence and rape. Sexual violence doesn't just occur between a person and a complete stranger; it can happen anywhere from work, school, home, and it can occur in current relationships and friendships, too. But sex isn't only about getting a “yes” from someone. Anything shouldn't just go if it is consensual. Therefore, it is important for people to know what their partners agree to, and how to formally understand what affirmative consent means.

Understanding consent can prevent the process of victim-blaming and shaming, and lack of communication within partners who are forced into sexual activities. There will be no more of “she/he was just asking for it” or “she/he didn't say yes or no.” In the Steubenville Ohio rape case, the defense's primary argument was that the unconscious girl who was raped was too drunk to give out a formal “no.” They didn't consider that as rape because it wasn't violent or forced. Unconscious or not, understanding and getting serious about affirmative consent is key to avoiding sexual assault. In order to combat perpetuating a rape culture, it is important to get educated about the understanding and use of affirmative consent. Getting serious about consent can be very effective in preventing sexual violence and can build a sex positive culture where people don't perpetuate rape culture.

Lastly, the rape culture in the United States needs to be acknowledged as an epidemic because rape includes a variety of issues from the way victims of rape are silenced to the way raped individuals are portrayed in fiction and by the

media. We need a revolution of values and resistance rather than rape being extensive and normalized due to societal beliefs about gender and sexuality. In order to combat rape culture in the United States and in the media, people need to stop sexual objectification—especially in women's appearances, declare action when witnessing potentially threatening situations or sexist language by applying the “bystander approach,” redefine and reshape masculinity, and get more serious and positive about affirmative consent. Rape culture and its drastic impact need to be addressed and acknowledged by people who are unaware of this controversial disruption in our society. Taking a stand and doing something about the normalization of rape and sexual assault in the United States and in the media will help us prevent a rape culture.

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The Demand: Human Trafficking and Pornography

What immediately comes to mind when we hear the word prostitute? More often than not, people visualize prostitutes as scantily clad women that patrol the streets of booming cities such as New York or Las Vegas. We are quick to shame them with words like ignorant, filthy, easy, and sinful. The bulk of society today views a prostitute as a woman who willingly sells herself for money or material items, and enjoys a harlot-like lifestyle. Although these are widely accepted assumptions, is it possible that we are missing a larger piece of the puzzle? I argue that, yes, indeed, we are blindly condemning these women and girls to lives of wickedness and vice.

What many people do not know is that the majority of prostituted women are victims of human sex trafficking. Human sex trafficking can be defined as “The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act where such an act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion” (“What is”). Victims are most commonly women or girls who have been manipulated and abused into a life of sex trafficking. Traffickers ensnare their victims with promises of love, education, riches, and an altogether better lifestyle. These promises, however, are simply lies, and the victims soon discover their true fate: a life of pain and misery. Trafficked victims endure a slew of physical and psychological tortures. Nearly all are starved, isolated, threatened, drugged, and forcibly raped by the traffickers themselves (“Facts”). Furthermore, human sex trafficking is not limited to the “common prostitutes” that we have previously discussed. Women and girls from every country and every stage of life fall victim to sex trafficking and are sexually exploited in countless ways.

Now that we have established a background on the nature of human sex trafficking, it is time to consider

another major contributing factor in this world of sexual exploitation. After some discussion, this thread of commonality may appear thicker than previously supposed. This thread I speak of is none other than pornography. Simply put, pornography is “the depiction of erotic behavior intended to cause sexual excitement” (“Pornography”). In reality, that simple definition truly is simple. The world of pornography, especially with today’s technological advancements, is so quickly evolving that many people do not realize how obscene it has become. We no longer live in a world where *Playboy Magazines*, with pictures of nude women, are considered scandalous. Our society now indulges in and even condones extremely hardcore pornography. Videos of loveless, malicious and degrading sex acts are only a few mouse clicks away. Pornography now often depicts women being raped, beaten, and forced to participate in unimaginable sexual behaviors. Children have also become a major target for this kind of sexual exploitation.

Because there is such a growing demand for this deviant form of pornography, it is only logical that there is a growing demand for victims. By illegally trafficking women and children, pimps and pornographers are able to do business more efficiently. All in all, the demand for human sex trafficking and the incidence of sexual abuse and exploitation are fueled by the production and consumption of pornography.

To begin, we will take a look at how the production of pornography contributes to human sex trafficking. In her article “The Connection Between Sex Trafficking and Pornography,” Michelle Lillie illustrates how deeply rooted sex trafficking has become in the making of pornography. For example, she explains that pornography is often used in the trafficking industry to teach victims about the different sexual acts customers prefer. Additionally, Lillie gives further insight on the aggressive nature of this training when she states, “Besides being forced to watch pornography, victims of sex trafficking often have a much

more violent and personal interaction through forced performance in the industry.”

Moreover, Lillie elaborates upon her statement above by proposing two main reasons for traffickers forcing their victims into making pornography. Foremost, she explains that traffickers need to gain psychological control over their victims. She points out that when pornography is made of a victim, traffickers often use it as blackmail and consequently as a mechanism of control. Furthermore, she discusses some of the financial incentives for traffickers to make pornography of their victims. She explains that even though pimps are already making money through human trafficking, producing pornography opens the door for more money-making opportunities. For example, Lillie points out that because the majority of human trafficking occurs online, traffickers will post pornography of their victims to attract clients or trade with other traffickers. In sum, Michelle Lillie argues that pornography has become an integral part in the world of human sex trafficking. The points made in her article support the claim that pornography production is contributing to the demand of sex trafficking and abuse.

Because prostitution is also very embedded in the world of sex trafficking and pornography, I feel it is necessary to address some of the problems within this topic. Melissa Farley and Emily Butler offer further insight on pornography, prostitution, trafficking, and abuse in their article “Prostitution and Trafficking—Quick Facts.” To start out, Farley and Butler explain that pornography is in fact prostitution. They state, “To distinguish pornography from prostitution is to deny the obvious. When you make pornography of a woman, you make a prostitute out of her. It is also to deny the plain fact that pornographers are pimps, third-party sex profiteers . . .” Farley and Butler argue that even though victims portrayed in pornography aren’t getting money from individual sex buyers, pornography can still be considered prostitution.

Additionally, Farley and Butler elaborate upon the abuse that is associated with sexual exploitation such as prostitution and pornography. They quote a woman who recalled her horrific experience as a prostitute. The woman states, “In the process of selling my body, I was shot five times, stabbed more than thirteen times, beaten unconscious several times, had my arm and nose broken, had two teeth knocked out, lost a child that I will never see again, was verbally abused, and spent countless days in jail” (Farley and Butler). Though this account sounds shocking, this woman’s story is not uncommon. Recent statistics show that about 80 percent of women involved in pornography or prostitution are raped, and nearly all are verbally and physically abused in countless ways. Similarly, Farley and Butler explain that nearly all victims of sexual exploitation have some form of post-traumatic stress disorder. As we can see, sexual exploitation such as trafficking, prostitution, and pornography go hand in hand, and the incidence of abuse and mistreatment is not uncommon.

Continuing on this subject, Donna M. Hughes adds her voice to the argument of how pornography production contributes to sex trafficking. In her article “The Demand for Victims of Sex Trafficking,” Hughes illustrates the extent to which pornography has become a major player in the world of sexual exploitation. She states

Production of pornography and internet sex shows are markets which often rely on trafficked victims. Some pornography is produced for private consumption or it is traded among trusted offenders, but a large amount of adult and child pornography is produced for commercial distribution. The value of it depends on if it is illegal and the extremeness of the abuse to the victim.

Additionally, Hughes gives statistics from around the world showing the relationship between pornography production and sex trafficking. She explains that in many countries, sex trafficking centers are simultaneously used to mass produce pornography. For example, Hughes describes

how Budapest, Hungary, has become a target city for victims trafficked from all over Europe. As a consequence, Budapest has also become the pornography production capital of Europe. Hughes also points out that because trafficked victims are so available and affordable, pornographers from all over the world will come to produce their material in that particular country.

Moreover, Hughes elaborates upon the sexual exploitation of children, specifically in the pornography industry. She explains that because of advancements in technology and the internet, the distribution of child pornography can now spread very rapidly. Hughes also states that the cycle of abuse will never end because pictures and videos posted to the internet can never truly be deleted. She gives additional statistics of child trafficking in the Philippines, illustrating the seriousness of the problem. Hughes explains that because of increased poverty and lack of education, parents in the Philippines will often allow their children to be used in pornography for a small sum of money. These videos or pictures typically feature the children dancing or performing sexual acts with a toy. Parents argue that because their child is not actually being touched in a picture or video, no harm is coming to them (Hughes). Again, we see that the production of pornography increases the incidence of sex trafficking and sexual abuse and exploitation.

Now that we have discussed how the production of pornography fuels the demand for sex trafficking, it is time to take a look at another side of the issue. The question to ask is this: Why is the demand for sex trafficking so high? One could argue that people today consume pornography in greater quantities than any generation prior. Because of this, the demand for harder, more deviant forms of pornography has gone up, and so has the demand for sex trafficked victims. In this section of my paper, we will discuss how the consumption of pornography fuels the demand for sex trafficking.

To begin, we will take a look at an interview done by *Citizen Magazine* regarding pornography. In this interview, Lisa Thompson, a Salvation Army liaison for the Abolition of Sexual Trafficking, when asked if pornography and prostitution are in any way connected, she gives an analogy of a train. She explains that sex trafficking is the caboose of the train, and the other cars are various types of sexual exploitation such as strip shows, prostitution, pornography, and so forth. Thompson claims that most people will acknowledge sex trafficking as outright exploitation, but as they move up the track, it gets harder for people to recognize the underlying connection between their designated car and sex trafficking. Thompson states: “At the head of the train you’ve got that engine that’s completely fueled by demand. It’s just like coals being thrown on the fire, and so it’s speeding down the track. There’s just a lot of different ways that these issues are interconnected” (qtd. “Pornography is Prostitution”).

Furthermore, Thompson argues that pornography is prostitution for the masses. She explains that even though there is no physical contact between two people, the consumer is still paying to watch and, in a way, participate in the sex act. Because consumers are supporting the pornography industry financially, they are in turn supporting the sex trafficking industry. As a result of this, Thompson argues that consumers of pornography should be considered “sex exploiters” just as much as an actual pimp or trafficker (qtd. “Pornography is Prostitution”).

Similarly, the Freedom Youth Project Foundation further discusses the ways in which pornography consumers are contributing to the demand of sex trafficked victims. In their article, “Pornography—A Gateway to Human Trafficking,” they point out how prevalent pornography has become in our society today. For example, they explain that more often than not, soft core pornography is laced into television shows, advertising, and the internet. Although many people have become desensitized by these small occurrences, our society fails to recognize the harm that

comes from consuming pornography (“Pornography—A Gateway”). The Freedom Youth Foundation argues that pornography harms not only the actors, but also the producers and especially the consumers.

Moreover, they give statistics about the prevalence of pornography in our American Society, stating that 28,258 internet users are viewing pornography every second (“Pornography—A Gateway”). They also argue that it is not just traffickers who are demanding newer, younger victims. The Freedom Youth Foundation claims that pornography users are undeniably creating the demand for newer, younger, and more abusive forms of pornography, which in turn fuels the demand of sex trafficked victims.

When we take the time to consider the facts, it is clear to see how pornography contributes to the world of sexual exploitation. More specifically, how the demand for human sex trafficking and the incidence of sexual abuse and exploitation are fueled by the production and consumption of pornography. Though society often debates about the morality of pornography use, evidence supports the fact that pornography does in fact inflict harm and incite damage to all that are involved with it, especially those who become victims of sex trafficking.

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Holly Fullmer
English 1010

Take Two Walks and Call Me in the Morning

Thanks to our ancestors who were visionary leaders and administrators in their day, we have lands that have been preserved for our enjoyment. National Parks are found throughout North America because of the efforts of many forward thinking people during the late 1800s and early 1900s. However, for almost two centuries prior, there was almost no effort to preserve land. This is why there is little green space to be found in many of the oldest and largest cities in America, which grew quickly and steadily after the arrival of the first immigrants. For over a century, many people have made it a priority to provide these green and blue spaces so that lives and property would be improved for the better. It seems there is a lot more push from city councils these days for green space in our communities than there has ever been.

For the past several years the county in Utah in which I reside has made it a top priority to develop walking and biking trail systems. These trail systems extend over 100 miles through the innermost urban cities to the outermost rural areas and have been a real treat to the people and families who live, work, and play here. Everyone seems to enjoy the trails and is in favor of the implementation of these trail systems. People have always enjoyed outdoor recreation and gardening, and, as of late, I have found myself really developing a passion for it as well. There seems to be a direct connection between spending time outside and my mental and physical health and well-being, and I have begun to take serious notice.

In the article entitled “Outdoor Activities Improve Mental and Physical Health,” written over a decade ago, is information on a study conducted by Harris Interactive Inc. entitled “Exploring the Active Lifestyles,” which reported that 90 percent of Americans over age 16 believe that getting outdoors reduces their stress levels and gives them a

sense of accomplishment. The article shares that people who participate in at least one activity outdoors on a regular basis reap mental and physical health benefits. This could certainly be the reason why there has been more effort by our government officials to provide green space in our communities. In this literature review, I will discuss the benefits of green spaces and outdoor activity. I will share information which suggests that outdoor activity and exposure to green space may be a means of treatment for people with specific ailments.

In the article “What is Green Space Worth” by Jason Byrne, Byrne explains that we do not realize the value of our open spaces. Byrne says there are more benefits to green space than just our physical and mental health, and we undervalue its importance and also the importance of well-being to other species. A senior lecturer from Griffith University, Byrne believes the worth of green space is far more valuable than we realize. He says there is not equal access to parks and green spaces in our communities because land was not preserved during the Industrial Revolution. Therefore the older and denser parts of our largest cities are “park poor” (Byrne), which means they have little or no parks and open space. Suburbs developed since the 1950s have provided more access to parks and green spaces.

Studies done by Jon Crompton and others have shown there is real evidence that property values near parks tend to be higher. Byrne believes that people are willing to pay more for their lots to be near these parks, even if they do not plan to utilize them. Evidence from health researchers shows that people who live near these green spaces tend to be more physically active and have a reduced likelihood of being obese, which reduces the risk of diabetes and several types of cancers. Evidence from research by Frances Kuo and her colleagues indicates that proximity to urban green space can lower the incidence of domestic violence, stress, depression, and may even mitigate attention deficit disorder in children. There is also plenty of evidence

from research to suggest that parks reduce pollution—including noise pollution, reduce flooding, harbor rare and endangered species, and even promote biodiversity (Byrne). Perhaps these are some of the very reasons why our communities are fighting for more parks and open land than ever before.

Stress and depression problems are of great concern to many people. There is evidence to suggest that our high tech world is the cause for much of our stress and depression. What is being discovered more recently in regard to green space and health? In “Natural Outdoor Environments and Mental and Physical Health: Relationships and Mechanisms,” authors Margarita Triguero-Mas and Payam Dadvand, et al., share collected data of the beneficial aspects of natural outdoor environments (aka green spaces) and also areas near lakes, streams, or water sources (aka blue spaces) on adults. They wanted to see if the data proved that green or blue spaces were beneficial to people's health. The data did show an improvement in adults in both mental and physical health for green space, but data for blue space were not conclusive.

Outdoor recreation has always been part of the American life. In the article “Perspectives: Health and Livability our Top Priority,” Thomas M. Farrell, National Recreation and Parks Association president, shares his perspective on the Health and Livability Summit he attended with over 400 participants. He says people are energized and ready to help our communities become healthy. With the national obesity crisis reaching epic proportions and increased healthcare costs, he says state and local entities are feeling these strains and want to help prevent health problems that face our nation. Farrell says that parks and recreation agencies are poised and ready for action. Parks and recreation promote healthy lifestyles and community livability and truly reflect the American dream. As a steward of our nation's places and spaces, together with top leading experts in public health agencies, they can leverage for positive, effective change in our communities.

This author gives clear reasons why we are seeing more of a push from our governments to improve our lands with green space.

Research suggests that getting outdoors is beneficial to our health, but what about outdoor activity? Much is known about physical activity in general and its health benefits, but is there evidence to suggest that outdoor activity is more beneficial than indoor activity? At the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry a team of authors “analyzed existing studies and concluded that there are benefits to mental and physical well-being from taking exercise in the natural environment.” Their study found that most trials showed an improvement in mental well-being: compared with exercising indoors, exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization, increased energy and positive engagement, together with decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression.

It was also concluded that participants reporting enjoyment and satisfaction with outdoor activity stated they were more likely to repeat the activity at a later date (“Benefits”).

These articles have indicated that there is a link between well-being and outdoor exposure; however, is outdoor activity an alternative treatment for people with specific ailments? Authors Marina De Rui and Elena Toffanello et al. demonstrate findings of their vitamin D study on elderly Caucasians to find whether leisure time activities such as cycling and gardening improved the Hd levels of vitamin D-deficient subjects. The article entitled “Vitamin D Deficiency and Leisure Time Activities in the Elderly: Are All Pastimes the Same?” shares the importance of vitamin D and the significance it has on the elderly. The authors argue that outdoor activities may be more beneficial than oral supplements in improving vitamin D absorption. Another study on the elderly and outdoor activity is showing to have favorable results also. The article entitled “Therapeutic Effects of an Outdoor Activity Program on Nursing Home Residents with Dementia” reports data

collected from a study on an outdoor program vs. an indoor activity program in nursing home residents. The authors Bettye Rose Connell and Jon A. Sanford et al. share that previous studies have shown improvements in dementia patients who are involved in a structured activity program. They also share data which suggest that nursing home patients who have limited bright light exposure tend to have sleep problems. They studied sleep patterns of their subjects prior to the activity study and also during and after and concluded that maximum sleep hours significantly improved following outdoor activity.

We hear of air pollution problems in densely populated areas and concerns people have with exposure to this unclean air. Are there risks associated with outdoor activity? In the article “Clearing the Air: A Review of the Effects of Particulate Matter Air Pollution on Human Health,” authors Joseph Thundiyil and Andrew Stolbach show how particulate matter (PM) can affect human health and how it affects cardiovascular and respiratory health. Some studies show how certain diseases could be exacerbated by exposure to PM. The authors also share information to help individuals with PM complications improve their health.

A lot is known about the dangers of exposure to UV light, yet this risk can be eliminated or drastically reduced by simply wearing proper protective clothing. Like the risk associated with UV light exposure, perhaps there might also be ways to minimize the risks of PM exposure, especially since the benefits of outdoor activities are so great.

It is evident from my research that the benefits of outdoor activity are vast. The benefits extend to more than just individuals; they can truly benefit a community, perhaps even our society, as Jason Byrne has demonstrated. As we develop our lands, it is imperative that we address the health and well-being of humans and other species, as well as the other issues discussed. Perhaps if there were more doctors and practitioners willing to recommend outdoor activity as a means to combat ailments rather than a synthetic pill or

powder then we may begin to see more people embrace the idea of green spaces and parks. If people were less stressed, both physically and mentally, perhaps the healthcare system would not be in the shape we find it today. It would be beneficial to see more research on eliminating PM exposure and also in the development of children. The fact that attention deficit disorder (ADD) has become a major epidemic in our children is of deep concern to many. If there is evidence to suggest that ADD could be mitigated as Byrne suggested in his article, then this would be an area that should be explored.

In an age where we are relying heavily on our technology, and our children are growing up in front of screens, we must not forget to get back to basics. Nature can provide this for us. I can't help but think about my own childhood where it was the norm to play outdoors from sun-up to when mom called and said it was dinner time, and we were happy, healthy individuals. There was a sort of a free-range parenting attitude about children and families 30 or more years ago, with the idea that everybody looked out for everybody. Perhaps looking back is the way to look forward. The advantages we leave to our posterity will be as great as the National Parks left to us by our predecessors.

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Alexandra Harris
English 1010

Edward Snowden: The Hero vs. Traitor Debate

Throughout the decades, there have been a few select individuals who, seeing something wrong within a system, have chosen to risk their jobs, freedom, and sometimes their lives in order to expose flaws and bring about significant change. These individuals are referred to as whistleblowers, and the nature of their actions inspires the question, are they heroes or traitors? In June 2013, Edward Snowden took on the role of whistleblower by exposing the extent to which the National Security Agency (NSA) had been spying on allies, enemies, and American citizens alike.

Snowden was an employee of Booz Allen Hamilton, a technical consulting firm that worked as a subcontractor for the NSA (“Edward Snowden”). Because his position allowed him access to sensitive information, and because he persuaded coworkers to unwittingly provide him access to yet more secure files, Snowden was able to steal hundreds of thousands of secure files from the NSA. The majority of these files proved what leaders of the NSA had openly denied on several occasions: the government was collecting data on its own citizens. Most of the data came in the form of metadata, or data about data. Metadata describes how, when and by whom a particular set of data was collected, and how the data is formatted (Beal). To Snowden, collecting so much information without warrant, or with a rubber-stamped warrant, constituted a violation of basic civil rights as outlined in the Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the US Constitution. It was because of this moral dilemma that Snowden felt obligated to bring the information to the public’s attention, which he did with the help of newspapers like the *Guardian* and the *Washington Times*.

Unquestionably, Snowden’s disclosure sparked a long-overdue discussion on the proper limits of surveillance. The dilemma, then, is whether or not the ends

justify the means. In this literature review, we will examine articles representing both sides of the argument in an effort to establish Edward Snowden's place in history based on his moral character, motives, and the consequences of his actions. Because the media has had a strong influence in the portrayal and subsequent characterization of Snowden as a whistleblower and/or traitor, I've chosen to include several articles from major news sources.

As the Snowden incident unfolded, many articles were written in call-and-response fashion that they might determine Snowden's role as either hero or villain. Two writers to do this were John Cassidy and Jeffrey Toobin of *The New Yorker*. In Toobin's article, "Edward Snowden is No Hero," Snowden is portrayed as reckless and self-important. He recalls Snowden's statement of distaste with a country and organization that monitor every citizen's actions, to which Toobin responds with a scoff. The idea that Snowden was unaware of the nature of the NSA suggests that he was far less observant than the average US citizen. Further, Toobin scrutinizes Snowden's motives for leaking the classified documents. He notes that though Snowden claimed to be acting on the grounds of morality, he was acting on a sense of personal disapproval and not necessarily exposing illegal activity.

Of course, as Toobin explains, not all those who leak information are bad. Some information sharing is necessary in a country that values freedom of speech and press. The trick is to use discretion when deciding what and how much information to release. He shakes his finger at Snowden's readiness to publish every document, and he commends the *Guardian* and the *Post* for recognizing the need for some secrecy in the matter.

On the opposing side, in his article "Why Edward Snowden is a Hero," John Cassidy defends Snowden by noting what information was contained in the leaked documents, and more significantly what was not, therefore establishing that Snowden was calculated in his actions, and therefore, not reckless. One of the most prevalent

arguments for Snowden being a traitor is that he revealed highly sensitive information that could be used against the United States and hamper intelligence operations. However, Cassidy declares that this conclusion is unfounded. The leaked documents, he points out, did not contain information about algorithms, targets, military plans, or names of undercover US operatives. Rather, they revealed a pattern of warrantless domestic and international surveillance through tracking metadata.

Additionally, they contained evidence that the United States wasn't just spying on terrorists, but that they were also keeping tabs on allies. As for the information that was gained through warrants, Cassidy argues that the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act Court, the system responsible for approving such warrants, showed a lack of proper oversight by approving any request sent its way. It is the conversation, sparked by the leaked documents, to change these ways that inspires Cassidy to label Snowden a hero.

Still, others question Snowden's competence in handling the situation as a whole. Journalist Fred Kaplan's article "Why Snowden Won't (and Shouldn't) Get Clemency" depicts Snowden as a delusional megalomaniac. Kaplan admits to being a proponent of whistleblowers as a whole due to the high moral ground they stand on. However, he is far from believing Edward Snowden acted in the best interest of the country and morality. In considering clemency, Kaplan agrees that leniency might be an option had Snowden simply stolen documents, but the content of the stolen documents is what ultimately damns him. According to Kaplan, the papers included information on tactical operations, communications among military assets, and other sensitive subjects. He continues by discounting the methods Snowden used in obtaining the documents. This included deliberate, premeditated law breaking and turning unsuspecting coworkers into accomplices. Now, all of this is not to say that Kaplan agrees with other extremists in the marking of Snowden as a

traitor, but certainly that Snowden should face consequences for the initial theft.

In direct response to Kaplan's article, Nicholas Clairmont wrote a piece titled "8 Indisputable Reasons to Support Edward Snowden (And Many Disputable Ones Not To)." As the title suggests, this article outlines several reasons why Snowden is actually one of the good guys. Starting with the most obvious point of contention, Clairmont addresses the theft. There is no denying that Snowden stealing the documents constituted illegal activity; however, Clairmont insists that Snowden was stealing stolen information. In other words, the information in the documents was obtained without warrant or with unduly given warrants and therefore illegally acquired.

Another point Clairmont makes counters Kaplan's statement that the contents of the stolen documents were condemning. Instead, he reminds the reader that insurgents also have intelligence-gathering technology and that the information included in the documents was not anything insurgents weren't already aware of. Some have criticized Snowden, claiming that by revealing the NSA's inner workings, he has turned the world against the United States. However, shouldn't the NSA be to blame for committing the wrongs in the first place? Clairmont equates this misplacement of blame with "a childhood bully who strikes his victim with his own hand and tells him to 'stop hitting yourself'" and then proceeds to "put the victim into detention for hitting himself."

Clairmont continues to advocate for Snowden by defending his motives. Where Kaplan makes Snowden out to be an infiltrator, Clairmont states that infiltration of the NSA was unnecessary as Snowden already had a job that granted him access to the information he needed in order to proceed with his mission. Additionally, many condemn Snowden's choice in where he sought asylum. After all, Russia and China aren't exactly beacons of democracy and human rights. Again, Clairmont points to logic behind Snowden's choices. With other, more "pleasant" countries

being threatened by the US were they to grant the traitor asylum, Snowden was left with few options. That aside, what reason would he have to believe the US government's offers to discuss clemency when history offers a pattern of false promises on their part? Finally, Clairmont challenges the public disgust with Snowden's direct violation of the oath he took to protect the same information he ended up revealing to the world. Because Snowden was formerly a CIA employee, he swore an oath to protect and uphold the US Constitution. He also swore an oath of secrecy. However, when those oaths came into direct conflict with one another due to the unconstitutional nature of the NSA's actions, Snowden was forced to choose. Either way, he would be breaking an oath. At least the one he chose to honor was in alignment with his moral conscience (Clairmont).

Douglas Rushkoff, a CNN reporter, takes a consequence-focused approach in judging Snowden's actions in his article "Edward Snowden is a Hero." While he certainly acknowledges Snowden's bravery in leaving behind his family and lavish lifestyle in the name of the greater good, Rushkoff is particularly impressed with long-term changes that the leaks have set in motion. He commends Snowden for recognizing the need for human intervention in the wake of a technological explosion. With technology being an omnipresent force and terrorists and other shady folk exploiting that same technology for the purpose of causing large-scale harm, Rushkoff recognizes that government might feel the need to step up its surveillance game and reach its full data-mining potential. He dubs this concept "present shock."

Subsequently, he warns against complacency. People are surrounded by technology constantly and have become blind to its invasive nature. In fact, they invite it into every aspect of their lives and don't stop to consider the real world around them. Rushkoff likens the government's use of surveillance to the complacent citizen's acceptance of this rapidly growing world of technology. He claims that they

have become so numb, so caught up in the wave of information and constant change that they've overreached by taking out the human aspect of the equation. Government employment of technology wasn't originally intended to invade the sacred principle of personal privacy, but Rushkoff warns that if everyone remains complacent and lets it keep accelerating at the present pace and without restraint, then the consequences could be what Snowden calls "turnkey tyranny." It was Snowden's act of stepping back and recognizing the dangerous potential of a machine-run society, and then acting on that notion that Rushkoff applauds.

David Schanzer, director of the Triangle Center on Terrorism, stands firmly on the anti-Snowden side in his article "Staying Off the Snowden Bandwagon." He proposes that Edward Snowden's actions were far more detrimental to national security than beneficial. Schanzer points out what the media seems to have overlooked, noting that in his haste to expose the NSA's wrongdoings, Snowden didn't take the proper precautions to safeguard information that puts national security at risk. Within the documents were details on how the United States gains intelligence on enemies domestically and abroad. That information could, in turn, be used by those very same enemies to block any future surveillance, opening the United States up to unforeseen terrorist attacks (Schanzer).

Schanzer also disputes the concept of Edward Snowden being perceived as a figure of civil disobedience. Snowden advocates have claimed that he is the next Martin Luther King, Jr. or Nelson Mandela, but according to Schanzer, there is a key component missing. To him, "true civil disobedience requires the acceptance of punishment as a form of protest against injustice." When Snowden released the documents, he was already out of the government's reach, taking refuge in China and then Russia. He may have been willing to expose that sensitive information in an effort to spark surveillance reform, but he was far from willing to accept consequences for his illegal actions (Schanzer).

Perhaps the main question surrounding Edward Snowden's heroism or betrayal is whether or not he fully meets the parameters of civil disobedience. William E. Scheuerman delves into this in his article "Whistleblowing as Civil Disobedience: The Case of Edward Snowden." He defines civil disobedience as "a public, nonviolent, conscientious yet political act contrary to the law usually done with the aim of bringing about a change in the law or policies of the government." The requirements of civil disobedience exhibit moral seriousness, conscientiousness of consequences, nonviolence, and a desire to bring about awareness on a broad, public spectrum. As for the question of accepting punishment, Scheuerman suggests that such a concept is vastly outdated and overemphasized.

Throughout the article, Scheuerman refers back to a statement Snowden made in Moscow to articulate his motives and desired outcomes surrounding the leaks. According to the statement and contrary to claims that he was trying to bring down the super-spy organization, Snowden declared that his goal was to enhance the NSA by bringing it in alignment with constitutional law. His motives are further described as promoting a public awareness of an institution that acts against them in the interest of a vague concept called national security. As for moral seriousness, Scheuerman notes that Snowden examined every option and subsequent consequence before electing to release the documents in the manner that he did. Snowden recognized the need to take action, however illegal, against a greater violation of basic human rights and international law. While certainly the NSA began with good intentions and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court was put in place to act as a check and balance, Scheuerman claims that those systems were not successful in doing the job they were intended for. After all, in a democratic state where openness is of high value, having a secret court to approve secret doings by a secret organization is rather counterintuitive, leading one to believe that such a court may be a legal way

to cover immoral actions on behalf of the state (Scheuerman).

However narcissistic the media and government paint Snowden to be, Scheuerman points out the obvious flaw in this portrayal. Prior to the leaks, Snowden had a comfortable life in paradise and chose to follow his moral conscience, losing everything in the process. Not only that, though he is in possession of highly sensitive and profitable information, Snowden refuses to sell US secrets to foreign adversaries (Scheuerman). Many claim that his actions could lead to more widespread lawless behavior stemming from any petty disagreements with policies, but as Scheuerman points out, Snowden ardently declared that pushing for change in a nonviolent manner is the morally correct thing to do. He says, “Coercion and force would deny others their basic rights.”

Most significantly, Scheuerman disputes the act of accepting punishment as a requirement for civil disobedience. Naturally, authorities were outraged by the seemingly traitorous acts of Edward Snowden and, because of them, they threw the full force of the law at him. Snowden was charged with violating the Espionage Act, which basically accuses him of sharing secrets with enemies of the State. Knowing this was likely to be the outcome, Snowden acted preemptively and sought asylum in Hong Kong and later, Russia (Scheuerman). Traditionally, punishment is a requirement for civil disobedience, and because Snowden wasn’t willing to accept his, some have said that discredits the validity of his actions. However, Scheuerman argues that accepting the predetermined guilty verdict and accompanying 30-year prison sentence would have much more effectively undone Snowden’s work. Because of his contributions in sparking a much-needed debate on surveillance and revelations about the illegal actions of the NSA, one might argue that Snowden deserves, at the very least, a fair trial and not exile or prison (Scheuerman). Still, opponents say that accepting punishment shows devotion to a higher law regardless of

personal disagreements with factions of that same law. To this Scheuerman says that maybe it is time for a new rule where civil disobedience is the ultimate end. Were Snowden's actions characteristic of ordinary criminality and meant for personal gain, then by all means treat him as a criminal and judge him accordingly. However, since his intentions were to further progress in human rights and in doing so he lost everything, Scheuerman argues that the very different nature calls for a different response.

When ordinary people choose to do extraordinary things, such as take on the NSA and expose national secrets, their character and motives are often brought into question. Such is the discussion surrounding Edward Snowden. Do the subsequent talks of surveillance reform outweigh the illegality of stealing classified documents and releasing them to the world? Journalists, citizens, and experts in the counterintelligence field all chime in as history struggles to claim Snowden as a traitor, a hero, or the new face of civil disobedience.

What is of greater consequence is the conversation Snowden's actions and the government's ruthless response in pursuing him has initiated. When all is said and done and the government has been proven to be equally in the wrong, if not more so, why should the whistleblower still be left to choose between exile and life in prison? I believe Scheuerman nailed it when he described a need for an international legal system. With the rate of whistleblowing incidents increasing rapidly, there needs to be an option for fair trial and political asylum regardless of whether the exposed party is a private corporation or the government. The only sure way to do this is through creating a global legal system so that the judge and jury remain unbiased and justice may prevail.

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John Kilcrease
English 2010

**Net Neutrality:
Why Netflix Really Isn't Looking Out For You**

The Internet. In roughly 25 years, it has become the largest source for information in the world. In all of history, no one has had access to this much information. And no one has ever dreamed that it would be as fast as it is today. Within seconds, trillions of questions can be answered from anywhere in the world or in space and at any time of the day or night. We can see and talk to people from the other side of the world, all while we're playing Candy Crush and updating our Facebook statuses. We can Kickstart our favorite new indie band while we watch the new viral cat video on YouTube and bid on sports tickets on eBay. Most Americans can't even imagine the world without the Internet. The Internet is arguably the fastest developing invention of the last half century. It has defined the 21st century. But there are many who believe that it is under attack.

They believe that cable companies and internet service providers (ISPs) are trying to leverage their market power in order to charge tiered fees to websites based on how much broadband the websites use and how fast they want their connection to be. They argue that this will lead to smaller companies being forced to either pay up or be forced out of the market. This would mean no more overnight web sensations. There would be no more startup web companies. The web would be ruled by large corporations, with cable companies choking out any business that tries to make its way into the market. The web as we know it would be changed forever. These people who make these claims push that the best solution to the perceived dilemma is something commonly known as "net neutrality." Basically, net neutrality proponents believe that all web companies should have equal and non-discriminate

access to broadband. And there are literally millions of people who support this view.

In fact, on September 10, 2014, thousands of sites across the World Wide Web participated in “Internet Slowdown Day,” an online initiative in which websites purposefully slowed down their websites in order to raise awareness for net neutrality and protest against proposed FCC regulations that they believe would undermine the internet. Battleforthenet.com, one of the websites that assisted in coordinating the huge protest, provided all the code necessary to put infamous “spinning wheels of death” on each and every one of the sites on the web that wanted to participate. The results were extraordinary. According to Battleforthenet.com, over 2.3 million emails were sent to Congress, over a quarter of a million comments were filed with the FCC, and over 300,000 phone calls were made. This amount of consumer participation is unparalleled.

But here's a question: what exactly were all these people supporting? Net neutrality proponents believe all web companies should have equal and non-discriminate access to broadband, but what does net neutrality actually do? Is it really as good as it sounds, or are there side effects to such regulations that would cause it to do more harm than good? What is the truth behind net neutrality regulations? Are they truly as glorious as they are made out to be? I must argue that, despite majority opinion, they are not.

Determining the true meaning of the term “net neutrality” is very difficult. The term itself was coined by Tim Wu in a paper he published in 2003, and many people have different interpretations of it. The former CEO of Google Eric Schmidt said that “People get confused about net neutrality. I want to make sure that everybody understands what we mean about it. What we mean is that if you have one data type, like video, you don't discriminate against one person's video in favor of another. It's OK to discriminate across different types . . .” For example, Comcast can't charge YouTube more money to stream their

videos to viewers than they do to stream Vimeo, but it's OK if they charge Netflix more for streaming video than they charge Spotify for streaming music. And this seems to fit in line with most businesses' beliefs. Now, the entire issue of network neutrality can be much more complex, but we're simply dealing with the ideology in general. Now, this seems fair, at least on the surface. But these regulations, as pointed out by Robert E. Litan and Hal J. Singer, that prohibit this "discrimination" are also prohibiting innovative business models that would be very beneficial to consumers. For example, AT&T recently proposed something they called "sponsored data." How it works is that certain companies can pay the data provider for the data that consumers use when they access their websites. For instance, Google could pay AT&T so that whenever someone accessed any of Google's services on their data-enabled devices, the data would not count against that user's data cap for their respective plan. Many pro-net neutralizers argue that this would mean that large companies would be the only ones who could afford the fees and the smaller companies would be forced to close down.

But would it really? Or would this simply lead to increased competition, particularly among cable companies? The interesting thing is, ESPN was the original proposer of this plan, not AT&T. That's not something most net neutralizers are aware of. The issue is more than just big bad cable companies against the web industry. Even some online businesses are trying to start things that go against what they claim to be fighting for.

Take Netflix, for example. In mid-2014, Comcast proposed a merger with Time Warner Cable (TWC), which the FCC approved. The FCC stated that they believed that there was enough competition in the market and that this merger was not against anti-trust regulations. Not everyone, however, approved like they did. Chris Smith, writing for Yahoo News, reported that "Netflix has filed a 256-page petition with the FCC asking the regulator to deny the proposed Comcast-Time Warner Cable because it would

cause 'serious public interest harm.'" So, Netflix clearly had a problem with Comcast purchasing TWC and believed that it was against net neutrality regulations. Smith reported that "Netflix has defended Net Neutrality numerous times before, all the while having to ink interconnect deals with four major ISPs (including Comcast and TWC) to ensure its customers get an enjoyable movie streaming experience." So Smith believes that Netflix fights against what they consider anti-neutral network acts. And he believes that it is for the betterment of the customer that Netflix does this. Now let's take a look at another example of what many would consider anti-net neutral, but it's going to be a little different.

In early 2013, Larry Downes wrote an article for CNET titled "The Strange Resurrection of Net Neutrality" about yet another net neutrality dispute case. The case involved TWC and Netflix. Here's where things get interesting: in this instance, it was TWC complaining, not Netflix. In fact, it was Netflix who was accused of being anti-net neutral. It seems Netflix was restricting access to their Super HD and 3D streaming services being viewed on TWC's network. This was because TWC had not signed on to Open Connect, which Downes reports is "a proprietary content delivery network." Now, stop and think for just a minute. Netflix "defended Net Neutrality numerous times before, all the while having to ink interconnect deals with four major ISPs (including Comcast and TWC)" and did it all "to ensure its customers get an enjoyable movie streaming experience" (Smith). But this time, TWC, not a web business, needed protection from, not a big ISP, but from the very business that is among the leaders in the net neutrality campaign. So is TWC really the "bad guy" in all of this? And is Netflix really concerned about the freedom of its customers?

When Netflix complained to the FCC about the Comcast-TWC merger, they argued that "Comcast and TWC's claims that there is enough competition in the business are disingenuous, as in many markets there's no

such competition . . .” (Smith). When Comcast proposed to buy TWC, they stated that they would not be in violation of anti-trust regulations and that it would not affect market competition. Netflix clearly disagreed. They believed that if these two ISPs merged, the resulting market power would give Comcast the ability to force Netflix and other companies like them (particularly video streaming services) into non-net neutral situations. But would it? Would they really have this much market share, and would they be able to leverage the market share they did have against web businesses? Do Internet service providers really have this much power? Well, Brent Skorup and Berin Szoka reported in an article for *Wired* that “Time Warner lost over 300,000 subscribers” after Netflix withheld its high quality services. So, Netflix used its market power and TWC, as a direct result, lost an enormous number of its subscribers. Now tell me, who had the leverage? Did TWC or Netflix? I think the answer is clear. Netflix had the upper hand, and Time Warner was the one complaining. So what is the real issue? Clearly, forcing customers to get a different internet service provider is not a terribly “consumer friendly” thing for Netflix to do. So what is it that Netflix, the supposed champion of the consumer when it comes to net neutrality, is really after?

To answer this question, we need to go back to what our entire American economic system is based on: capitalism. We need to take a look at what it is that drives capitalism, what makes it work, and what happens when it is interfered with. Adam Smith is regarded by most to be the founding father of the capitalistic economic theory. He once said, “I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good.” In other words, Smith had never known of an instance where a lot of good was done when someone provided a service or a product when their sole reason for producing was for the common good. In fact, he is famously noted for saying “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to

their own interest.” Basically, we don't get the goods and services we do because the producers are really friendly humanitarians who want the human race to better itself, but because they are out for themselves, and the best way to better themselves is to sell us the products and services they do. Perhaps Adam Smith's most famous quote is “Every individual . . . generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it . . . he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.”

People are out for their own gain, and in the process of selfishly benefiting themselves, they do more good for the rest of humanity than any humanitarian out of the love in their heart could. This is how capitalism works. This is why capitalism works. People and, therefore, the companies they run are selfish. It's a fact. They all want to maximize the amount of money they make. In the process, they help the general population, but only because in the process it makes them better off themselves. And they'll do almost anything they can to do it. Even if it means pushing, and sometimes breaking, regulations put in place to make sure companies keep competing. The more companies fight with each other in an effort to make the most money, the better off the customer will be in the process. But the more companies that are fighting, the less the respective companies will make. So, companies, in an effort to maximize profits, will naturally try to reduce, and in cases completely eliminate, the amount of competition in that particular section of the market.

This fact is the reason behind the net neutrality debate. Web and cable companies are trying to reduce competition in their respective markets, while at the same time making sure their respective “partners” are still happy. Without the web companies that consumers want, cable companies will be unable to sell internet service to customers. Customers will leave and go find another way to get access to their favorite online services, just as they did

when they couldn't watch Netflix on their TWC-provided internet service. And without the internet service provided by cable companies and other ISPs, web businesses have no way of reaching the customer and making money. It's a complex and somewhat delicate relationship, but who has the most power over the other? And what does the competition between each business look like in their respective markets? What we need to look at is how competitive is the web business market, how competitive is the ISP market, and how these factors contribute to the relationship between ISPs, web companies, and the issue of net neutrality.

No one would debate that there is a lack of competition in the web market. No web business is without some form of competition. Although the amount varies based on what the company provides, it still exists. When it comes to competition among ISPs, however, it is a much more controversial debate. Some believe that there is very little competition in that market, while others believe that there is enough competition in that market. This is the reason for the large debate and controversy surrounding the Comcast-TWC merger. The FCC believed that there would still be enough competition in the market to keep the newly enlarged Comcast from making decisions that would be harmful to consumers. As noted earlier, a few companies like Netflix complained that there would not be enough competition. They believed this lack of competition would give Comcast more power than Netflix in the market. All of this is just a power struggle. The web industry wants power over the Internet powered by ISPs, and ISPs want power over the Internet that is sustained by the web industry. They both want power, and they are both trying to push the FCC in an effort to gain an advantage over the other. And they're both doing it (although one more so than the other) under the banner of "net neutrality."

If I were to walk out onto the street of any town in America and ask someone walking down the road what company they most liked giving their money, they probably

wouldn't name their cable company. In fact, Comcast was voted "2014 Worst Company in America" in a poll taken by Consumerist. This is the second time in less than five years they have been given the award. Cable companies are some of the least liked and most hated companies in the country, and businesses like Netflix use this to their advantage. They present the net neutrality issue as "Big Bad Cable vs. Good Free Internet." They present themselves to be on the side of the consumer, and they present cable companies as only concerned about themselves. And this statement is not completely wrong.

Cable companies and other big ISPs really are out for themselves. In reality, their only reason for providing internet and television to customers is so they can make money. That's it. That's their only reason for existence. They don't want to give Internet access to individuals in the name of "free knowledge for everyone." They don't claim to do it to "change the world." In providing web access, these ISPs do accomplish these things, and they do it quite well. But they don't do it because they're humanitarians. They just want to make a profit. And Netflix seems to really like pointing this out. They point fingers at ISPs as large corporations whose only objective is to make money, and they'll do almost anything they can to do it. What Netflix forgets to mention is what their objective is.

Sure, they claim to fight for the customer. And this is somewhat true. They want consumers to be happy—at least when it comes to their product. In the end, Netflix's objective and that of every other company on the web is to make a profit. Really, there's no difference between the objective of cable companies and the objective of online businesses. Their goal is the same: make a profit. That's what all businesses everywhere are ultimately trying to do. They all go about it different ways. They all do it with varying levels of success. Some, like Netflix, prefer to focus on customer service. Cable companies, on the other hand, tend to focus on nickeling and diming customers for all they can. But in the end, all they're both trying to do is make

money. And net neutrality is simply another tool that companies are using to make more of it.

So where does this leave us? Yes, it's clear that both web companies and ISPs are trying to make a profit. And they're both trying to use this rather unclear concept that is rather irrelevant and highly restrictive known as "net neutrality" to make more of a profit. But what are we as consumers supposed to do? Why should this really matter to us? Well, for starters, we need to stop lobbying Congress and the FCC for more net neutrality regulations. There are already solid anti-trust regulations in place that will make sure that there is still plenty of competition in the internet service provider market. We should instead be asking for less restriction and more freedom. If more freedom is given to businesses to create innovative products and business models, we as consumers will benefit. If more restrictions are placed, then the web industry will be unable to develop new products and services at the current pace that it is. And, in the end, we as consumers will suffer for it. So I must agree with Battleforthenet.com's call to action: "Protect internet freedom." Protect the internet we know and love through anti-trust regulation. But in the process don't destroy the capitalistic economy we all depend on. Don't allow the internet to be restricted from continual and innovative development. Keep the internet free, and keep our market open.

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Susan Mecham
English 2010

The Effect of Facebook on Social Interactions

The other day I overheard this conversation between my two grandsons, Ethan, 5, and Will, who is 7. Ethan was explaining to his older brother about a new kind of gum he had seen. The “gum” was clearly something Ethan had imagined. Will, not allowing himself to be taken in by his younger brother, said, “I’ve never heard of that kind of gum. Where do you even buy it?”

Ethan replied, “At a store; it’s called, My Favorite Store.”

“There’s no such store. Even Mom hasn’t heard of it,” answered Will.

With great confidence Ethan proclaimed, “That’s because it’s not on Facebook yet.”

Facebook is a very popular form of social media used worldwide by approximately 845 million users. People are able to interact with other people within seconds, and they are virtually unlimited to the extent and distance of these interactions. In the 1990s, long before Facebook, when the internet became a major source of connecting with the outside world, scholars from Carnegie Mellon began to research the effect of these connections and the growing evidence of society becoming more disconnected from each other as the lack of human contact grew. This study was called the “Internet paradox” and concluded that the increased use of the internet was already starting to cause increases in loneliness (Marche, 2012). The availability of constant contact these past 20 years is something our ancestors would never have imagined. Although people today have the ability to stay “connected” continually through Facebook, society as a whole is more detached from one another than ever before because of the false sense of identities loneliness compounded by its use.

Facebook users create accounts in order to connect with “friends” worldwide, and many create a false sense of

identity as they try to impress all these so-called friends. It feels safe to create a digital persona that most people will only see on Facebook which then allows users to decide the type of image they want to portray to others whether it's real or a facade. For many people, this leads to anxiety as they try desperately to keep up with this pretense and figure out exactly what they want people to know about them. Then they wonder, "Do people care and what are they really thinking about this image I'm projecting?"

A recent study looked into the relationship between self-esteem and the amount of time spent maintaining a profile persona. The results found that those with lower self-esteem spent most of their time on Facebook worrying about what others had posted about them and making sure that their profile continued to reflect the image they wanted portrayed by removing anything that was negative to this image. On the other side, those with high self-esteem spent their time adding to their profile with pictures and information about themselves confident in the image they were portraying (Maldonado, 2014). An important takeaway from this study is that people who create an authentic self-profile tend to have higher self-esteem and less anxiety over maintaining their image.

Another issue that arises from people creating a false sense of identity on Facebook is the comparisons people make of their own lives to the lives they are reading about. They tend to think that everyone else is happier, that others' lives are fuller and much more exciting than the day-to-day life they know. The University of Michigan did a study on the consequences of using Facebook on a daily basis. "The study found that Facebook use results in decreased rates of moment-to-moment happiness, which culminates in lower overall satisfaction with life in general" (Souza, 2013). One of the main reasons Facebook is so popular is because people can see what others are doing, but this also comes at a price as they compare themselves. Not to be outdone, people then tend to make their own life sound grander and more exciting. At the end of the day,

they are all ordinary people doing ordinary things but posting them in spectacular ways.

With everyone wanting to look good, it becomes very superficial and obvious why these connections do not create true and meaningful relationships. Meaningful relationships are developed by genuinely getting to know someone, as my grandmother would have put it, warts and all. True bonding comes when we know and accept each other's weaknesses and love each other anyway.

The time spent on Facebook also takes away from the face-to-face interactions with people who are in the same room. This is especially true for families. When everyone is more connected electronically, there is a decreased connection in their relationships, and the results of this are profound. Dr. Jim Taylor (2013), an internationally recognized authority on parenting, said "There is less sharing, which means that parents know less about what is going on in their children's lives and consequently, have less ability to exert influence over them."

It used to be that in order to contact a friend, you had to pick up the phone that was attached to the wall (no privacy) and call, knowing that their parents may answer or you had to run over to their house and ring the doorbell again assuming that their parent may answer the door. This gave parents the opportunity to know who your friends were. With Facebook, parents are much less likely to know and be able to monitor the people their children are socializing with. A research study titled "Who Uses Facebook?" was conducted in Australia (where half of the population is actively using Facebook); the research found among other things that, "Facebook encourages more contact with people outside of our household, at the expense of family relationships . . ." (Marche, 2012). With family being the nucleus of society, it is crucial that Facebook does not interrupt the face-to-face interactions in the home.

On the other hand, Facebook can actually help and strengthen family bonds where family members live long distances from each other; it provides a great way of staying connected and in contact. As with everything else, it's all a matter of moderation and how it is used.

A screen will never be able to replace physical face-to-face interactions. Hayeon Song, an assistant professor of communication at University Wisconsin-Milwaukee, conducted a research study in order to answer the question, "Are people becoming lonelier even as they feel more connected online?" Her research was comprised of other relevant studies in order to come to the conclusion that "As loneliness increases, the time spent on Facebook increases. This means, at least, that Facebook does not help in reducing loneliness even if we feel more connected while using it" (Song, 2014). The debate is still going on as to whether Facebook is the cause of loneliness or if people who are already lonely are more attracted to Facebook. Either way, it can become a vicious circle for those who feel lonely as they try to replace actual social interaction with the isolation of online contacts.

The lack of quality social interaction has increased dramatically as people gather less and meet fewer people. Stephen Marche recited these statistics in his article *Is Facebook Making Us Lonely?* (2012):

Personal confidants decreased from 2.94 people in 1985 to 2.08 in 2004. Similarly, in 1985, only 10 percent of Americans said they had no one with whom to discuss important matters, and 15 percent said they had only one such good friend. By 2004, 25 percent had nobody to talk to, and 20 percent had only one confidant.

This is a sad state to find people in. It seems that we have now outsourced personal, meaningful relationships to professionals as we look at the following statistics. In the late 1940s, there were 2,500 clinical psychologists, 30,000 social workers and fewer than 500 marriage and family therapists. In 2010 these numbers had increased to 77,000

clinical psychologists, 192,000 clinical social workers, 400,000 nonclinical social workers, 50,000 marriage and family therapist; plus 105,000 mental-health counselors, 220,000 substance-abuse counselors, 17,000 nurse psychotherapists, and 30,000 life coaches (Marche, 2012). Of course, this is not all related to Facebook, but it does show that as a society we need genuine, meaningful face-to-face interactions in order to be healthy socially and to be less affected by loneliness.

Today we have the ability to stay connected to one another continually through Facebook, yet society as a whole is more detached from one another than ever before because of the false identities created on the site, the time spent on a screen vs. face-to-face interactions, and a sense of loneliness that can be compounded by its use. Creating a false identity on the site not only harms the individuals who create the personas as they become anxious in keeping their images up, but it is also harmful to other people's self-esteem as they compare this fake identity to their very real world. The time spent online vs. face-to-face interactions takes time away from real communication; this is especially true for family relationships. When everyone in the home is more connected electronically, there is a decreased connection in their relationship with each other. Whether Facebook is the cause or the effect of loneliness, researchers don't know. But for those who are already lonely, it can compound that feeling of isolation. Online connections will never be a good surrogate for being with actual people face to face.

Facebook is not all bad; it can be very useful if used wisely and in moderation like most anything else. And, according to Ethan, it can keep us informed and up-to-date on the latest and greatest.

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Katy Montag
English 1010

Art as Therapy

The *New Internationalist* published statistics regarding mental health that state that 450 million people have mental health problems worldwide, with 50 percent of these beginning before age 14 and 75 percent beginning before age 25. Mental health problems are everywhere; they are inescapable. Mental illness does not discriminate against wealth, power, age, or race. The *New Internationalist* states, “Loneliness in old age is a higher health risk than life-time smoking” (“Mental” 19). Actor Robin Williams unexpectedly died just over eight months ago by suicide. Nirvana's lead singer Kurt Cobain died by suicide in 1994 after a lifelong battle with ADHD and bipolar disorder. Abraham Lincoln is said to have had depression and an anxiety disorder. Clearly this is an issue that needs to be addressed; one mode of therapy that is gaining popularity is art therapy. In this essay I will review the research of the effects of art therapy on people with psychological disorders. I will divide the essay into three categories: the effects of art therapy on people with autism, people with eating disorders, and people who have suffered trauma.

In the article “Outcome-Based Evaluation of a Social Skills Program Using Art Therapy and Group Therapy for Children on the Autism Spectrum,” author Kathleen Marie Epp studied a state-of-the-art program called SuperKids for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) children. Epp claims that ASD contains many different diagnoses characterized by interference with communication, social interactions, and circular patterns of interest, activity, and behavior (obsessions). She states that people with ASD cannot understand that other people have emotions; therefore, they cannot connect with other people. Likewise they have great anxiety to participate in any social interaction. Oftentimes ASD children will act out inappropriately under these stresses.

The program SuperKids' goal is to give children a different means of expressing this anxiety by way of art therapy. Art therapy is much more effective at teaching children with ASD, as opposed to talking and role-playing due to its less threatening nature. ASD children are much more willing to participate in art therapy than other teaching methods. Art therapy gives the child a more acceptable means of acting out aggression and anxiety, leading to fewer tantrums and problem behaviors. Epps also states that art therapy gives therapists important insights into a child's internal life that cannot be seen through different means due to communication impairments. Epps claims that doing therapy in a group lessens future anxieties about social situations. The group aspect also allows children to connect to one another in a low-pressure environment creating lasting relationships.

Epp States that her study showed statistically significant improvement in assertion scores, and decreased internalizing behavior (depression and anxiety), hyperactivity, and problem behavior scores. Epps concludes that her test scores suggest that children who use art therapy are improving at a faster rate than otherwise expected.

Asperger's syndrome is on the autism spectrum; however, the DSM-IV states that it is less intense than autism. Asperger's children usually have better communication skills and more intelligence than children with autism. Author David Henley discusses the effects of art therapy on children with autism, Asperger's syndrome in particular. Henley states that children with Asperger's syndrome are constantly terrified because they have mind-blindness. Mind-blindness is the inability to correctly interpret non-verbal actions such as kissing, hugging, and eye contact. They can perceive these as threatening behavior. For example, a smile seems like a sneer rather than a positive affirmation. Similarly, a hug may seem as an attack to the child. Because of this, the child often shows signs of abuse and abandonment due to the misguided feeling of being attacked. Children frequently have a

difficult time understanding emotions of others; it is as if humans were emotionless robots.

It can easily be conceived that children with Asperger's syndrome do not respond well to talk therapy because of the need to depict body language and human emotion. Henley states "making art stands to give this world meaning to this child in ways that no words can describe" (120). He believes that art therapy can give insight and enhance communication between the child and therapist that could not be present through other means. Henley states that children were able to begin to show signs of developmental growth through reason and appropriate emotion as well as appropriate depiction of others' emotions. Henley stated that children showed lessening of anxiety and ambivalence when they returned to their normal schools. He believes that children can break away from harmful obsessions by creating art.

ASD is considered a neurological disorder while anorexia is considered a psychological disorder; however, these two groups of people are treated by the same professionals and by the same or similar methods. These methods are studied and analyzed in the article "The Role of Art in the Therapy of Anorexia Nervosa." Authors Jane M. Wolf, Mary E. Willmuth, Thomas Gazda, and Alice Watkins stated that anorexia is the solving of psychological problems with the manipulation and intake of body control.

Wolf et al. argue that patients who felt too vulnerable to express their feelings verbally were able to create appealing and evocative depictions of their emotions in their artwork. Wolf et al. stated, "we have been struck by the contrast between the frequently constricted, if not bland, quality of verbal interactions and the symbolism and richness of the artwork" (199). They go on to argue that art has a kinesthetic and tangible quality that words lack; it can be seen and touched in a way that words cannot. This is very symbolic to a patient with an eating disorder because eating has the same tangible and kinesthetic qualities. Wolf et al. argue that anorexic patients have boundary issues

where they feel they must hide every emotion from the outside world; they feel that they are imposing themselves on other people by having these emotions. The art has concrete, tangible and kinesthetic qualities that allow patients to express emotion without feeling like they are imposing themselves on other people.

The authors are stating that art therapy is a less threatening way for anorexic patients to receive therapy. They argue that art therapy can be used as a bridge to talk therapies. Art therapy allows the patient to feel safe and comfortable to discuss painful occurrences. Over time, as patients are desensitized and familiarized with talk therapies, they can communicate effectively through speech. Wolf et al. conclude their article by stating that art therapy is not for everyone; however, neither is any type of therapy; patients must find the therapy that is effective for themselves.

The article "There's No Point Raging on Your Own: Using Art Therapy in Groups for People with Eating Disorders" also explores the use of art therapy and anorexia; however, they include all forms of eating disorders. It is not anorexia exclusive. Authors Karen Johnson and Sarah Perkins studied group art therapy for people with eating disorders. They define eating disorders as "the use of food as an alternative to feeling" (81).

It can be conjectured that patients with eating disorders are preoccupied with themselves. This leaves many patients feeling isolated and vulnerable within their lives and disorders. People with eating disorders have difficulty making connections to other people in their lives and especially within their disorder. They noticed that patients often felt disconnected and vulnerable, but using art materials in the beginning of group therapy allowed the patients to enter into an explorative and less conscious way of thinking. The patients were able to let their guard down and show aspects about themselves previously deemed unacceptable. Johnson and Perkins then argue that the art made the patients' internal worlds visible to the other group members, therapist, and to the patients themselves. Many

times, even if the patients could not make connections between their disorder and their artwork, they were able to make connections to other participants' artwork. Johnson and Perkins believe that when the patients begin to establish relationships with each other, they begin to focus on others' emotions as well as their own. The patients then relate to other people rather than food, and consequently the obsession with food diminishes.

Johnson and Perkins argue that food is used as a negotiator between the internal and external world of the patient. By this they are saying that the patients use food to control the hidden, internal feelings they have. In the same light, art can serve an equivalent purpose. The creation of art can replace this life-threatening behavior. Johnson and Perkins state, "It is through the pictures that patients can begin to allow themselves to be seen, and bear the aspects of themselves which they feel to be unacceptable" (96).

The development of an eating disorder is oftentimes the result of a previous traumatic event that has been left untreated. The DSM classifies trauma as unperceived sudden and unexpected experiences of a shocking nature, along with intense feelings of fear, terror, and helplessness. In the article "Evidence Based Trauma Treatment for Children and Youth," authors Angela Racco and Jo-Ann Vis argue that there are considerable negative effects that hinder children's cognitive, physical, psychological, affective, interpersonal, and behavioral functions following a traumatic event. Racco and Vis state that trauma hinders the ability to regulate emotion and communication. Subsequently, if the trauma is left untreated, children can develop more severe psychological conditions such as mood disorders, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, self-injury, and substance abuse. Racco and Vis state that early intervention is the most effective treatment for traumatized children due the developmental delays associated with trauma.

Racco and Vis argue that while cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is the most common form of therapy, it does

not address symptoms of dissociation, hyperarousal, and body awareness. They go on to argue that CBT is not effective for everyone, and this highlights the need for alternative therapies such as art therapy. Racco and Vis state that art therapy has the adaptability and flexibility needed to help children of all developmental, cognitive, and cultural diversities. They believe that art therapy is greatly effective for children who struggle to verbalize their experiences cognitively or behaviorally. They also state that art therapy gives a child a sense of competency and control after a traumatic event. Racco and Vis state that no single method of therapy works for everyone; they surmise that art therapy in conjunction with CBT will provide the most effective and holistic approach to healing.

The article “Adlerian Art Therapy with Sexual Abuse and Assault Survivors” written by Marni Rosen Saltzman, Monique Matic, and Emily Marsden also discusses the use of art therapy with sexually traumatized children. They argue that sexual assault is complicated and interpersonal, causing significant cognitive and emotional consequences. Oftentimes the child is completely overwhelmed; thus, feelings of betrayal and powerlessness arise. Saltzman et al. state that “The free creative power that is naturally embodied within a child and shapes a healthy lifestyle might be impaired by the coercion and violation perpetrated by his or her abuser” (225). By this they are saying that a child will place misguided meaning of the attack on the understanding of themselves and others, resulting in feelings of self-hatred, poor self-esteem, mistrust, shame, and guilt. This may lead to multiple problems later on such as flashbacks, hyperarousal, impulsivity, eating difficulties, irritability, sleeping difficulties, somatic complaints, and self-injury. These are all signs of the child's inability to cope and integrate the trauma appropriately.

All aspects of a child are connected, so when a traumatic event occurs, it creates a ripple effect, oftentimes silencing the child due to compounding fears and terrors of

the trauma. This is where the need for alternate therapies such as art therapy arises. The child who is silenced by fear will not receive CBT in an effective way. This child needs a more holistic and kinesthetic approach to therapy. Art therapy offers this in a safe, symbolic, and nonverbal way that CBT cannot. Saltzman et al. state, "Untouchable topics and unspoken memories can be represented by form and shape within artwork" (227). They go on to argue that when children are able to explore trauma in a nonthreatening way (art therapy), they are able to become desensitized, and are then able to verbalize their afflictions. Saltzman et al. believe that art therapy provides a connection between the therapist and child that would not be possible without the use of art therapy. They complete their article by stating, "Survivors can speak volumes without words" (241).

Even though the authors I have discussed researched different types of mental illnesses, they all have similar views on the effects of art therapy. Many of them stated that art therapy has a holistic, kinesthetic, and non-threatening approach to therapy that is useful to many people with mental illnesses. Several agreed that art therapy provides an insight into the patient's inner world otherwise unavailable to the therapist and the patient. Many of the authors also stated that art therapy enriches and acts as a bridge to other forms of therapy (CBT).

The authors made particularly valid points regarding art therapy; however, to test the effectiveness of art therapy, some suggest providing a control group for future studies. By having a control group, you are leaving a group of people untreated and this may cause ethical conflict. It would be beneficial to compare the effectiveness of multiple types of therapy techniques within one mental illness to see which one proves the most effective. It would be helpful for clinicians to know the best approach for each mental illness. Finally, oftentimes the studies were done in wealthier social settings due to the high cost of therapy. I would suggest getting samples from middle and lower class citizens to have a fair sample.

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Malack Mouhammad
English 1010

**The Effects of Technology on Child Development:
Stripping our Children of the Opportunity to Learn
through Technology**

Recently I attended the H.W. Ritchey Lecture hosted by Weber State University. The presenter at this lecture was NPR's Math Guy Dr. Keith Devlin. Dr. Devlin's main goal is to make math more fun and accessible to all ages, and one of the ways he does this is by using technology. He believes that by using educational apps on an iPad, iPhone, or smartphone—although not all games labeled as “educational” are really beneficial in improving ability—we can progress our children's math and problem-solving skills. Dr. Devlin believes that by using these iPad games it is like hitting two birds with one stone—the repetitiveness of the app helps children master math skills while the game portion keeps them engaged and away from the thought that they are actually doing work. This is just one of the many examples of the positive attributes that technology can have on child development.

In recent discussions of technology, a controversial issue has been whether screen-time is negatively affecting child brain development. On the one hand, some argue that children need to be kept away from technology because it is believed that it is rotting their brains; children require real-life interaction with a parent or caregiver to further developmental progression. From this perspective, you can see that technology is feared by many and seen as detrimental and not educationally beneficial to children. On the other hand, however, others argue that technology is in no way harming child brain development; in fact, they believe it is improving it. In the words of Dr. Dimitri Christakis, quoted by Ben Popper, one of this view's main proponents, “Screens are purely a delivery mechanism. What parents should be focused on is the content.” According to this view, many people believe that touch-

screens and technology on their own have no damaging effect on children—the real responsibility relies on the parents. What really matters is that adults monitor and choose appropriately what content their child will be exposed to. In sum, then, the issue is whether technology and touch-screens are harming our children or giving them more opportunities to learn.

My own view is that technology can encourage cognitive development and be educationally beneficial to children when used in an active way. Though I concede that touch-screens, when overused/misused in a passive way, can be harmful to a child's development, I still maintain that screen-time can be a very good source of learning for children when used appropriately with educational and interactive content. For example, I have two younger siblings—a 6-year-old sister and an 8-year-old brother. These two love technology and have been using it even before they were old enough to understand what it was. While they are both permitted a certain amount of time for passive use, they are still required to spend an amount of time for active use in which they use a variety of educational apps. The time spent on these apps has helped them both improve multiple skills, from reading and writing, to math and problem solving. Although some might object that these educational apps are not even close to being as beneficial as, let's say an actual teacher or parent, I would reply with a strong conviction, that those objections are unjustified because I have witnessed the benefits firsthand.

Teachers/parents cannot always motivate a child to do things repetitively in order to master skills; however, these games make a child repeat procedures multiple times while keeping them engaged, which in turn helps them to master certain skills. This issue is important because the children of this generation are growing up in a very technology-rich world and no matter what we do, we cannot escape what they are headed towards in their future—they are, and always will be, digital natives. The best

we can do for them is embrace technology and learn to live with it so that it benefits us and our children.

There have been many studies discussing the correlation between technology and children's cognitive development—some having positive views while others had negative views. A frequent study that has been referenced in multiple articles was that of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). In their studies, the AAP created a policy that strongly suggested that technology should be kept away from children under the age of 2 (Popper). They supported this policy with research on brain development that stated it was crucial for children at that age to be interactive with parents/caregivers (Rosin 2). It was mentioned, however, by Elise Hu, a reporter for NPR, that this policy specifically regarded passive screen-time only and not all screen-time. “But the doctor behind the American Academy of Pediatrics 2011 policy guideline discouraging screen time for kids under 2 says it specifically concerns passive screen viewing. That is, plopping the baby in front of a TV or film, or having media on in the background” (Hu 2).

They later re-submitted a revised version of this policy which stated that older children should be given very limited time on technology with only the most educational of programs. “For older children, the academy noted, ‘high-quality programs’ could have ‘educational benefits’” (Rosin 2). Although the AAP does not say so directly, it can be assumed that they also believe that active technology use can be educationally beneficial to young children.

One flaw that was found with this policy, however, was that it left out the consideration of “new screen” technologies. At the time of the resubmission of the policy in 2011, the AAP had taken into account smart phones and other new technologies, although they continued to approach this issue with the same negative views. The iPad had also been released and many families were becoming fairly familiar with it and its programs; however, AAP's policy in no way regarded the interactive apps and what effects, whether positive or negative, they could have on

child brain development. Many parents, although conflicted, wondered whether some good could come out of their child's use of technology. AAP also failed to regard any of these concerns in their policy. "The 2011 report mentioned 'smart cell phone' and 'new screen' technologies, but did not address interactive apps. Nor did it broach the possibility that has likely occurred to those 90 percent of American parents, queasy though they might be: that some good might come from those little swiping fingers" (Rosin 3).

Hanna Rosin, a national correspondent and senior editor for *The Atlantic*, refers to a phenomenon by the name of the "zombie" effect," created by author Jane Healy. Rosin explains that "[this phenomenon] raises the possibility that television might 'suppress mental activity by putting viewers in a trance'" (5). In other words, people who deem the "zombie effect" to be true believe that when children are watching TV their brains are not cognitively active or engaged.

Rosin also refers to another study with this belief. "An early strain of research claimed that when we watch television, our brains mostly exhibit slow alpha waves—indicating a low level of arousal, similar to when we are daydreaming" (5). In other words, this research indicated that children are not actually using any brain activity when watching television.

Rosin continues by stating that while this research has been overlooked by the scientific community, this false assumption continues to create the perception that watching television is equivalent to "staring at a blank wall" (5). Another researcher, however, disagrees with this statement. Heather Kirkorian, who studies media and attention at the University of Wisconsin, believes that a better comparison for watching television would be when we are reading a book (Rosin). Kirkorian says, in the words of Rosin, "During both activities we are still, undistracted, and mentally active" (6), meaning we are, in fact, actively using our brains when watching TV.

An experiment performed in the 1980s by Dan Anderson also helped to further disprove this theory. Anderson, wanting to test Jane Healy's zombie effect, constructed an experiment in which he put approximately 100 children aged 2 to 5 through a form of "TV hell" (Rosin 6). "He showed a group of children ages 2 to 5 a scrambled version of Sesame Street: he pieced together scenes in random order, and had the characters speak backwards or in Greek. Then he spliced the doctored segments with unedited ones and noted how well the kids paid attention. The children looked away much more frequently during the scrambled parts of the show, and some complained that the TV was broken" (Rosin 6).

What Anderson did was present the children with a jumbled version of a TV show and then later showed them the unedited version. In doing this, he found that the children paid much more attention when the TV show made sense. Rosin quotes Anderson in her article: "there is universal agreement that by at least age 2 and a half, children are very cognitively active when they are watching TV" (6). This proves that children's brains are in fact active and engaging while watching television. How else could we explain the fact that they were able to tell the difference between the two versions of the show? If their brains were not active and engaging then they would not have noticed that the edited version of the show did not make sense, and they would not have claimed that the TV was broken. Therefore, Dan Anderson's experiment on its own disproved this assumption that children's brains are not cognitively active while watching television.

In the joint position statement, "Technology and Interactive Media as Tools in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8," the writer argues that—as long as it is used appropriately, at the right time, and in the right context—technology can be very beneficial to early childhood development. This statement argues that technology is only effective when it is used in an appropriate way—passive (non-interactive) screen time "is

an inappropriate replacement for active play, engagement with other children, and interactions with adults” (“Tech and Interactive Media” 4). Throughout this statement the writer continuously refers to the importance of knowledge that early childhood educators should have in order to determine how and when to use interactive technology and media appropriately. There are many concerns about the effects of technology on child development, and, in this statement, they emphasize that it is the educator’s responsibility to know these concerns in order for parents to be able to utilize technology and media in an educational way. Ben Popper, online editor for *The Verge*, also agrees with this statement. He believes that it is the parents’ responsibility to monitor what their child is exposed to when using technology. He emphasizes the need to know the difference between passive and active consumption of technology.

Popper also writes about the “demonization” of new technologies upon arrival by those certain it is hurting their children, otherwise known as the “knee-jerk nostalgia.” People who respond to this nostalgia believe that whatever recent form of technology is released is the one that will harm our children. However, as soon as something newer comes out, the old technology becomes harmless, and maybe even beneficial. Back in 1835, the American Annals of Education believed that the reading of a novel was interfering with the thoughts and mind of the reader by “favoring unequal development” (Popper). Popper further explains their assumption by saying, “No one can have time for reflection, who reads at this rapid rate.” Nowadays, however, books and novels are considered important and anyone who reads a lot of them is believed to be very intellectual. Take schools, for example; even though there is technology everywhere, children are still required to have text books containing curriculum, and students are required to read multiple novels, all for educational purposes.

There are many people still carrying around this knee-jerk nostalgia. Popper states, “Radio was so addictive,

parents warned, that children were skipping meals to tune in, and film transformed viewers into sexually deviant criminals. Television was a mental wasteland. Video games created violent killers.” In the past, people even believed that comic books were destroying our children’s minds. Popper quoted the words of Dr. Fredric Wertham from 1948 as he says “Badly drawn, badly written, and badly printed—a stain on the young eyes and young nervous systems—the effects of these pulp-paper nightmares is that of a violent stimulant . . . Unless we want a coming generation even more ferocious than the present one, parents and teachers throughout America must band together to break the comic magazine.” And now, people are feeling the same way towards iPads and interactive apps; however, this should not be the case.

While all types of media have the potential to be harmful to children, that does not mean they actually are. As mentioned previously, in the past people believed that reading books was harmful to our minds; however, this is obviously not true. Books have gotten us to where we are now; if it were not for books—whether it is books containing events of history, mathematical principles or just plain fiction, we would not have much of the knowledge we have today. As for television, the theory that it is harming our children was disproved by Dan Anderson’s experiment mentioned in a previous paragraph.

When it comes to iPads and interactive apps, there have been multiple reasons as to why they do not harm children but, in fact, are beneficial to them. Popper talks about receiving an email with multiple studies from his mother, who he believes suffers from the “knee-jerk nostalgia,” all regarding the negative effects of technology on child brain development. In reading these studies, Popper found that many of them indicated that too much time spent with technology can cause a setback in the development of verbal skills, a lack of concentration, emotional instability, and an increased possibility of developing attention deficit disorder (ADD). However, with

more reading, Popper found that technology may not be such a bad thing after all.

Popper states that while a family completely focused on their own screens is the definition of being “alone together,” playing an interactive game on the iPad with a child may be a good educational and bonding experience. He believes children might benefit more from learning how to use technology at an early age because it will better prepare them for the very technology-reliant future; however, this is only true for active use of technology. Popper believes that technology, specifically touch-screens, can be valuable to a child’s brain development as long as they are used in an interactive way.

While passive use of technology can be harmful to a child, Popper believes that active use is a good source of learning. In his article, he refers to a study done by Heather Kirkorian in which she teaches two groups of children new words: one group had to watch a video, while the other group had to touch a screen to get a result. She found that the group of children who were actively learning and not just watching a video knew more words at the end of the experiment. Kirkorian says, “For kids under 30 months old, they learned more when there was an interactive component. And so I think that shows the potential touch-screen devices might have as educational tools...” (Popper). Popper later comes to the conclusion that as long as things are kept in balance, technology will in no way affect a child’s development.

Popper is not the only person to mention the idea of being “alone together.” Sherry Turkle, a professor at MIT, argues that because of technology and what it is capable of, we are able to be in a room with a group of our friends, and yet still everyone is focused on the little devices in their hands—she referred to this as being alone together. Turkle believes that with the increase in technology and the changes in the way we communicate, we are losing touch with each other and beginning to rely on technology to satisfy our relationship needs. She gives an example of a

grieving woman who seeks and receives comfort from a robotic seal. Turkle argues that this is not companionship, nor is it the same as interacting with another person. “And one day I came in and a woman who had lost a child was talking to a robot in the shape of a baby seal . . . But that woman was trying to make sense of her life with a machine that had no experience of the arc of a human life” (Turkle).

Rosin agrees with Turkle on that aspect; it is not person-to-person interaction. However, she believes that this is still a form of interacting and that we benefit from it in some ways. Rosin argues that by increasing the amount of interaction we receive from technology, whether from an iPad or from TV, we are increasing our development of cognitive thinking. Hu also believes that technology is a positive source of interaction. She discusses that technology which involves two-way communication, like FaceTime or Skype, can be beneficial educationally. She gives an example of a friend of her daughter’s—the 16-month-old baby was shown a video of her dad showing her that he bought her a ball. Later when they were on Skype, the baby was able to make the connection between her dad and the ball. “Research indicates that activities like Skyping or FaceTime — in which the baby communicates with a live human on the screen — can actually help babies learn” (Hu 3). Hu believes that technology can be a positive source of learning when there is interaction between a parent and their child or any adult and a child.

When it comes to the topic of technology, most of us, without prior research, will readily agree that it has improved our society and made our lives better/easier. Where this agreement usually ends, however, is on the question of whether technology has positive or negative effects on child brain development. Whereas some are convinced that it is destroying the minds of our children, stunting their academic potential, interfering with their cognitive development and causing them to become distant and addictive, others maintain that touch-screen technology is a great source for learning. It not only provides a method

of interacting when parents/caregivers are not around, but it also provides a way for parents and children to interact together. These people believe that technology, when used in an active way, helps to further improve a child's brain development and cognitive thinking. By using touch-screens and interactive apps as a way to teach children we are giving them the opportunity to learn in a fun and engaging way. This helps further their brain development because it allows them to enjoy learning while keeping them focused on the educational goal at hand.

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Dallin Olsen
English 2010

Attractive Alternatives for Autos and Air

As emission standards throughout the world become stricter, automakers are required to make many changes and compromises in order to meet them. I believe that alternative fuels are a way that automakers can effectively meet these requirements while maintaining the level of performance and efficiency that consumers require. Unless drastic improvements are made, internal combustion engines will continue to be detrimental to the environment and deplete precious resources. Options such as electric cars, hydrogen fuel cells, or hybrids offer cleaner emissions while remaining attractive to consumers. These alternatives will have an immediate effect on the air around us and decrease our dependence on fossil fuels.

In 1975, Congress enacted the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) laws, which regulate automakers' average fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions. These laws have set the standard for automakers to meet when developing vehicles. Over time, these laws have become much stricter. In August 2012, lawmakers “finalized groundbreaking standards that will increase fuel economy to the equivalent of 54.5 [mpg] for cars and light-duty trucks by Model Year 2025” (“Obama”). For 2015, the required average is 32.6 mpg. This sets a high standard that automakers must work toward in order to meet those emission requirements. Not every car must meet that standard, but every model's mpg is averaged across all fleet sales. In order to avoid million-dollar fines, automakers spend a large portion of their resources developing more fuel efficient vehicles.

While currently the primary source of automotive propulsion is the internal combustion engine, it has many negative aspects, including being inefficient and emitting noxious gasses. The California Energy Commission argues that “In gasoline-powered vehicles, over 62 percent of the

fuel's energy is lost in the internal combustion engine (ICE). ICEs are very inefficient at converting the fuel's chemical energy to mechanical energy, losing energy to engine friction, pumping air into and out of the engine, and wasted heat" ("Energy"). After other drivetrain and environmental losses, ICEs will only produce 15 percent of the energy from fuel into power to propel cars forward.

In urban areas, the dense smog emitted from vehicles can be dangerous for our health. Turning away from the traditional combustion engine can have an immediate effect on the air around us. Peter Lehner, executive director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, argues that "Eliminating tailpipe pollution is a major public health victory. In California, four out of ten people, often from low-income communities of color, may face increased risks of asthma, cancer and other health hazards because they live near busy roads. By reducing pollution, electric cars, buses and trucks help create healthier communities, with less illness, fewer missed days of work and school—even longer lives" (Lehner).

Electric cars are quickly becoming a viable option for non-gasoline-powered vehicles. Automakers are beginning to see a greater value in electric vehicles. Even as gas prices have lowered, consumers have increasingly been looking to electric cars as an option for their new vehicles. Government incentives and tax breaks make these vehicles more affordable and help pull consumers towards buying an electric vehicle.

Electric cars are much more efficient with the energy that they use. The US Department of Energy uses their website *fuelconomy.gov* to teach the benefits of electric cars. They claim that "Electric vehicles convert about 59 to 62 percent of the electrical energy from the grid to power at the wheels—conventional gasoline vehicles only convert about 17 to 21 percent of the energy stored in gasoline to power at the wheels" ("All-Electric").

Range anxiety is one of the main drawbacks keeping people from buying electric vehicles. Having a set distance

every day without an easy opportunity to recharge often will keep people from purchasing an electric vehicle. Electric vehicles are clear about what their driving range is on the battery charge that they have left. Most have a navigation interface that uses a map that can show drivers how far they are able to travel. Simply planning ahead can greatly decrease any feelings of range anxiety. With a range of over 100 miles, most commuters will not reach the limits of their battery powered vehicle in one day.

Electric cars have a quickly growing infrastructure. As every automaker looks to electric vehicles, they find ways to improve how electric cars can charge. Electric automaker Tesla has built a free supercharger network that has enough chargers to allow an electric car to travel across the country. Businesses have recognized the need for electric chargers and have installed them in their parking lots. As their popularity grows, more companies will look to better accommodate electric cars even more.

The lack of a combustion engine allows electric cars to give off zero emissions. In heavily trafficked urban areas, this can have a large effect on the air around us. However, in an editorial for the *USA Today*, Bjorn Lomborg argues that “Electric cars' global-warming benefits are small. It is advertised as a zero-emissions car, but in reality it only shifts emissions to electricity production, with most coming from fossil fuels” (Lomborg). Lomborg's argument is that while electric vehicles have no emissions, the effect of their production on the environment cancels out their lack of emissions.

While I agree that there is an unseen negative effect on the environment, the production of electric cars will continue to become more efficient. Just as automakers wish to make their cars more efficient, they will also seek better ways to build them. Electric cars' growing popularity will eventually begin to have a noticeable impact on the air in our cities. Emission-heavy power plants are often located away from the cities. Even if the amount of pollution created is equal between the energy drawn from power

plants and a regular combustion engine, that pollution is moved farther away from the air that we breathe.

Combining both a combustion gas engine and a battery-driven electric engine, hybrids contain many of the advantages that come from both worlds. Hybrids are the oldest of these new eco-friendly technologies. Since they have been around for over ten years, we are able to look back and see both the benefits and the drawbacks that hybrid vehicles give us. Because of the lack of unknowns, hybrids often hold a higher appeal to the consumer. Hybrids offer improved fuel economy over combustion engines, but do not have the restrictive range or charging times that hinder electric cars. The combustion engine is supplemented by an electric motor to reduce fuel consumption. The combustion engine may be used to charge a battery pack or to propel the vehicle.

Using a combination of combustion engine and electric motors, hybrid cars can be developed to be potent performance cars, meeting and surpassing the standards set by other similar sports cars. Automakers such as Porsche, Ferrari, or McLaren have recently developed top-of-the-line hybrid performance cars that use electric engines to fill in power where the combustion engines may lack. These hypercars have economy modes where they can also be driven short distances on battery power only. These systems allow the cars to return better gas mileage, helping the automaker meet the standards required of them. This kind of setup maintains the level of performance required while raising the level of efficiency with it.

Hybrid technology does not come cheap, with many cars costing well over \$10,000 more than their traditional combustion engine counterparts. Those hypercars cost over \$1 million and will never be attainable for most of us. The development of both electric and hybrid vehicles benefits one another. Both vehicles rely on battery packs to provide the power required of them. Many hybrid cars are plug-in, meaning that they can also be charged externally like a fully electric car, thus reducing the need for fuel. This sharing of

technology allows automakers to produce both types of vehicles at lower cost.

A newly developing type of vehicle uses hydrogen fuel cells to produce power. Chris Woodford at *explainthatstuff.com* explains that

Fuel cells are a bit like a cross between an internal-combustion engine and battery power. Like an internal-combustion engine, they make power by using fuel from a tank (though the fuel is pressurized hydrogen gas rather than gasoline or diesel). But, unlike an engine, a fuel cell doesn't burn the hydrogen. Instead, it's fused chemically with oxygen from the air to make water. In the process, which resembles what happens in a battery, electricity is released and this is used to power an electric motor (or motors) that can drive a vehicle.

The only byproduct of this process is water; there are no emissions into the air that we breathe.

Toyota has unveiled their new Mirai fuel-cell vehicle with plans for public sale in California for the fall of 2015. They join Hyundai in producing commercially available hydrogen vehicles. These carmakers hope to set the standard and show that there is viability in producing hydrogen powered cars.

Hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles have many advantages over other types of energy sources. It only takes around ten minutes to fill a hydrogen tank, which allows the driver to reach a distance near 250 miles. Electric cars take much longer to charge and have half the range of what a hydrogen fuel cell can provide.

Opponents of hydrogen fuel cells argue that the process of extracting hydrogen from other chemicals is just as detrimental to the environment as making electricity. The infrastructure is also not as readily available for hydrogen fuel-cell vehicles. Electric cars can charge at home during the night. Oftentimes filling a vehicle with hydrogen requires a long trip to the nearest station that sells it. These stations are also only currently available in California.

One aspect that will greatly influence hydrogen fuel cells' success or failure will be how popular they will be. The public must be able to view them as a viable alternative to a regular internal combustion car or an electric car. As they grow in popularity, the infrastructure will begin to grow. More companies will produce hydrogen, and there will be more stations that will sell it. It is difficult for companies to spend a large amount of money now on building an infrastructure that may not return any revenue. Carmakers will have to work closely with the government in order to provide enough incentives to persuade consumers to move toward hydrogen fuel cell-powered vehicles.

Motorsport and environmental impact are also intricately related. The technology used in race cars often trickles down into the cars used by the general public. Racing provides an environment to develop new technologies that can be used in other environments. Formula One and Le Mans have long been used as a test bed for new technologies. Both take advantage of new hybrid systems such as Kinetic Energy Recovery System (KERS) to use what was formerly wasted energy and use that energy toward propelling the vehicle.

The 24 Hours at Le Mans race has long been an opportunity for automakers to flex their new technologies and prove their reliability. Nick Jaynes argues that

Headlights, windshield wipers, disc brakes, diesel, and hybrids—believe it or not—are all technologies that owe their current state of existence to the 24 Hours of Le Mans. And thanks to new energy regulations for 2014 that sent every manufacturer back to the drawing board to focus on fuel efficiency, its influence will only grow in the years ahead.

Simple technologies that we use every day have come from these races. The endurance nature of these races requires that automakers make new technologies reliable and usable in the real world.

Efficiency is an important aspect to racing. The goal is to make the car drive farther and faster while reducing the need to stop and refuel or repair. This advantage drives automakers to develop new technology for these race cars, which eventually reaches the cars that we drive. Sam, an editor for *Racecar Engineering*, argues about this trickle-down of technology from Formula One racing:

Although Formula One is not a sport that is associated with greenness in the public consciousness, it actually has a strong track record of delivering environmentally relevant technology and capability. Success in Formula One is all about efficiency; the teams attempt to wring every drop of performance from a fixed set of resources to allow them to gain a competitive advantage over their rivals. In doing so, they create and develop technology which allows wider society to enjoy improved performance from fewer resources.

While tighter restrictions in racing seem to make it less competitive, it creates the need for more innovation. We will continue to see these technologies trickle down and directly make our cars more efficient. Racing creates a love for cars and what they can accomplish. Racing can inspire us with new ideas and help us look to the future of automotive technology.

In order for these alternatives to make a great change on the environment, automakers will need to make these cars affordable, and prove that they are capable over the traditional internal combustion engine. Government incentives and rebates also help entice consumers to move away from a traditional combustion engine to something eco-friendly. Most states offer carpool lane use for alternative fuel vehicles. The federal government offers up to \$7,500 in tax breaks for the purchase of a new plug-in electric vehicle (Federal). Many states offer even more incentives for purchasing these vehicles. Utah offers up to \$750 in addition to the federal incentives (Berman). These incentives make the price of electric vehicles available to

more than just the wealthy. After factoring in the cost of gas, these vehicles can often nearly pay for themselves. It is important that we keep these incentives so electric cars have greater appeal to consumers than traditional engines.

It is important for us to all look forward to what these new technologies can accomplish. As we gain more information, the appeal for alternative fuel cars will be greater. Every year these technologies become greater and more appealing. Cars become cheaper, and the infrastructure to support them will be stronger.

I believe that combustion engines have served a great purpose, but in order to better meet tightening emission laws, we must turn to other methods to propel our vehicles. Electric, hybrid, and hydrogen-powered vehicles will continue to become technologically stronger and have a direct impact on the environment around us. We will have less dependence on fossil fuels and find more renewable sources to power our vehicles.

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Social Media—Darwin Award or Straightjacket?

Social media has become a vital organ of society. With every beat and every breath, society becomes further ensnared into the necessity of using it. Social media's prevalence has led to much of American society owning at least one, if not multiple, accounts on these sites. Descartes' "I think therefore I am," has now been replaced by "I share therefore I am," with the increased societal need to be known online and become virtually a different person than in the real world (Turkle, 2012).

According to the Center for Digital Future at the USC Annenberg School (2010), teens and young adults on average spend as much time on the internet as they would on a part or full time job; some "spend 17 hours per week . . . some spending as many as 40 hours or more" (as cited in Davison & Stein, 2014). The rise in usage precludes the dangers of unmediated online presence, especially in cases with adolescents and young adults still in the formative stages of Erikson's psychosocial development. This particular demographic struggles with the attempt to discover personal identity and the fear of isolation, as they are subject to the onslaught of peers' positive or negative influence online that can lead to detrimental consequences.

Cyberbullying is intentionally and repeatedly [being] targeted by another . . . in the form of threats or harassments or [being] humiliated or embarrassed by . . . social networking sites" (Luxton, June, Fairall, 2012). These cruel remarks to individuals already predisposed to insecurities and instability lead to many adolescents and young adults taking extreme measures to "fit in" to their society and online presence. Cyberbullying leads individuals to take drastic actions to feel as though they belong, including altering body image to extremes and following popular "challenges" or practices, which can ultimately end in accidental or intentional suicide if unsuccessful. Many

times stunts are taken too far or the individual cannot find a way to fully integrate into popular society. Social media needs mediation by licensed professionals to recognize the warning signs of cyberbullying, body dimorphism, stunts going too far, and suicide.

Bullying is far from an antiquated concern, and cyberbullying specifically has become much more prevalent today. Cyberbullying is not a sometimes or a “only happens to someone else” type of an issue; “a review of data collected between 2004 and 2010 . . . indicated that lifetime cyberbullying victimization rates ranged from 20.8% to 40.6% and [offender] rates ranged from 11.5% to 20.1%” (Luxton et al., 2012) and “according to Katzer, Fetchenhauer, & Belschak (2009), nearly 75% of school-age minors experienced cyberbullying aggressions at least once in the last year” (as cited in Davison & Stein, 2014). Tomorrow’s future, today’s youth and adolescents, are being affected by bullies causing detrimental and preventable physical and emotional damage.

Bulimia nervosa, anorexia nervosa, binge-purge cycles, and Eating Disorders Not Otherwise Specified (EDNOS) are some of the mental illnesses that stem from individuals who develop body dysmorphic disorder. Body dysmorphic disorder is one of the only mental illnesses that has a distinct physical marker; the sufferer no longer sees their true figure or appearance, but rather a hyperbolic exaggeration of their features accentuating the undesirable—typically their weight. Those suffering from this disorder will not see their emaciated body, but rather they will perceive that they never will achieve the body that society has pushed onto them or expects from them.

According to the National Eating Disorder’s (2015) new study, it is approximated that nearly half a million teenagers struggle with eating disorders every year: Surveys “cross-sectional and longitudinal . . . have found that media exposure [can predict] body dissatisfaction, thin body ideals, and eating disorder[s]” symptomatic of body dimorphism as these individuals try to obtain the “model perfect” figure (as

cited in Perloff, 2014). The individuals are impacted by the Westernized body image ideals relentlessly shared and prescribed by the media. “Studies show that media exposure is consistently linked with women’s body dissatisfaction, internalization of the thin ideal, and eating behaviors” (Perloff, 2014) that are detrimental to physical health as well as emotional well-being. Cyberbullying on social media sites can increase the likelihood of predisposed individuals of being

influence[d] of “extreme communities”—online groups that promote and provide support for beliefs and behaviors normally unacceptable by the social mainstream such as anorexia . . . users of pro eating disorder sites may find support and acceptance that they have not found through other means. Although these online groups may provide the benefit of support, that may present a risk to the public by encouraging vulnerable individuals to harm themselves. (Luxton et al., 2012)

This harm comes from intentional mutilation, starvation, and vomiting food before it digests. Victims of eating disorders are harming themselves on a regular basis. Harmful online groups are the kinds of psychiatric help most victims find; there needs to be a safe place for those struggling to receive proper care. Intermediation of online forums is necessary to prevent vulnerable individuals from falling victim to cyberbullies and negative information.

These groups of individuals often post pictures of their gaunt and withered bodies with pride and are encouraged and further imposed by bullies and peers online who comment on these people’s physicalities. Victims are pressured by the social mainstream and ridiculed through social media platforms about the way that they look based on the “Internalization of thin-idealized female beauty . . . that is ubiquitously communicated in contemporary media throughout Westernized societies” (as cited in Levine and Chapman 2011). Bullies spitefully point out their victims’ flaws and insecurities. In this lightly patrolled venue,

cyberbullies are allowed to use vulnerable posts of individuals as ammunition in their tirade. Society is telling these young adults that they must look a certain way, and we cannot do much to help them once the effects have taken their toll on an individual's body and mind.

Strict guidelines for beauty, female beauty in particular, are enforced by vigilante bullies on social media platforms which is an important, detrimental, and most importantly preventable cause for eating disorders in today's young adults. Cyberbullies currently have a large domain with little intervention from the proper authorities to stop these rampant wrongdoers. Victim blaming is more accepted for cyberbullying than traditional bullying (Morrow & Downey, 2013). The victim is thought to be able to avoid, stop, and/or diffuse the situation as the actors are so far removed from the imminent situation in this virtual community. As most social media sites are user arbitrated, many warning signs are missed as users are not trained to recognize warning signs; therefore, with a form of mediation on social media sites by licensed professionals, cyber bullying could decrease as offenders are recognized and stopped.

Challenges and stunts spread on social media sites, typically through videos of someone attempting a challenge posed to them by a friend or peer. These stunts range from the "knife game," attempting to quickly stab a knife between spread fingers, to trying to achieve a celebrity's lips by sucking on a shot glass, causing the lips to swell.

On social media, the bigger the stunt, the more views the video will receive. This potential surge in hits or views entices youth to strange and grandiose challenges. There "happens to be a trend among young adults to one up each other and do risky stunts and post it to social media" (Walsh, 2014). This growing trend not only puts individuals in exceptionally preventable danger, but also wastes public resources to attend to emergencies that arise from these stunts. Sheriff Rich Stanek addressed these extreme attempts stating that he "strongly advise[d] against

participating in attention-seeking stunts that waste valuable resources” (as cited in Walsh, 2014). Young adults not only put their own lives at risk, but also endanger the public’s safety; emergency responders attending to a social media stunt backfire are unable to respond to an accident or more legitimate cause. If these type of posts were regulated by an authoritative entity, these useless emergency calls would diminish as trends would not be seen and, therefore, unable to perpetuate.

One prominent challenge is the “fire challenge.” This challenge requires participants to pour a flammable liquid—usually household acetone—onto bare skin and strike a match. The goal of this challenge is to put out the fire before flesh begins to burn. Regrettably the short-sightedness of this stunt is not limited to adolescents; one teen so desperate for social media attention attempted this stunt with the aid of his mother who now faces charges of aiding the delinquency of a minor (Collins, 2014). Ernest Grant, a spokesman for the Jaycee Burn Center in Chapel Hill, stated that his center has treated two individuals “who burned themselves severely in the stunt . . . usually second- and third-degree burns which are some of the most devastating injuries that can happen to someone . . . requiring extensive surgery and perhaps leaving them scarred for life (Collins, 2014). People will literally set themselves on fire to gain notoriety online. These stunts are dangerous, and the posting of these videos must be mediated and stopped instead of being allowed to spread like wildfire.

Social media stunts also contribute to society’s implication that females must look a certain way to be desirable and fit in. The viral social challenge known as “#KylieJennerChallenge” is the act of making one’s lips more pronounced—swollen—by sucking on a shot glass or other small rimmed container to mimic the lips of reality star Kylie Jenner. This challenge is met with legitimate concerns: “Dr. Dendy Engelman, a board certified dermatologic surgeon . . . [said] there is potential risk for

scarring and permanent disfigurement with repeated attempts” (as cited in Benson, 2015). Many adolescent females do not only attempt this challenge once, but accept it as a new beauty routine even though many repeatedly fail the desired outcome. Kylie Jenner claims she only uses lip liner to fill outside of her natural lip line. However, Dr. David Alessi suspects that she had fillers: “the lips have been augmented and is more than lip plumpers can do” (as cited in Tate, 2015). The “role models” young girls see on social media are women with rare or contrived beauty objectives; this leads adolescents to take extreme measures to meet the demands of this social media public. Every girl must post their attempts to conform to this new challenge in beauty.

The power of the online world is so influential that even the White House has succumbed. President Barack Obama appeared on many social media sites such as BuzzFeed (2015) for a pop culture video and on Jimmy Kimmel (2015) to read some negative tweets about him from Twitter. While having the president of the free world thank himself for issues out of his control is amusing, the necessity of social media in today’s society is astounding. Adolescents spend the majority of their time on the internet each day (Daveson & Stein, 2014). This constant need for attention leads youth to take drastic measures to remain in the spotlight, including taking more risks for their next video, or tearing down someone virtually to give themselves a higher mountain to stand on top of.

Suicide is the intentional taking of one’s life, often by means of firearms or pills. In the United States, “more than 30,000 suicide deaths” occur each year and “nearly 1 million suicide deaths worldwide” (as cited in Luxton et al., 2012). The rates of suicide have increased dramatically throughout the years; “although cyberbullying cannot be identified as a sole predictor of suicide in adolescents and young adults, it can increase risk of suicide by amplifying feelings of isolation, instability, and hopelessness for those with preexisting emotion, psychological, or environmental

stressors” (Luxton et al., 2012). Cyberbullying is a proactive cause to vulnerable individual’s decisions, while “natural” or biological and environmental agents play a less active, even an inactive role. While an individual may have the potential or predisposition for suicidal and depressive tendencies, the incessant influence of cyberbullies can become a decisive switch point. Individuals may have gone their entire lives without experiencing any inclination toward self-mutilation or suicide; however, social media’s bullies degrade their self-esteem and will for life, and trigger in them thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

The ease of finding information online is astounding. The internet is full of many informative and time wasting sites and videos. This creates a new way to enforce social norms and spread reformative ideas. Luxton et al., (2012) state the following:

Prosuicide information on the internet, including detailed information on suicide methods . . . [Combined with] video-sharing Web sites . . . [is] gain[ing] in presence and popularity on the Internet, especially since the creation of YouTube in 2005. A primary concern . . . is that they may normalize and reinforce self-injurious behaviors or cause disinhibition.

Apathy of adolescents is a dangerous weapon, especially on social media, as it causes users to believe that nothing is a “big deal.” These sites and posts put a ubiquity to extreme behaviors and a reputation for gaining status in society. As it stands, 300 hours of video are posted every single minute on YouTube (“Statistics,” 2015). Among these funny cat videos, song covers with lyrics, and cooking channels is an array of depression stories and how they could not get over their illness, leading viewers to lose hope. These desperate cries for help go virtually unnoticed by authorities until it is too late.

Adolescents and young adults today post every thought they have and beverage they order on social media sites. This starts the competition of how many likes, views,

and retweets they can get on their postings. For some individuals, “social media platforms are commonly used for the expression of suicidal thoughts and feelings, particularly by young people” who may be in this same competition for how many hits they can get on their posts (Robinson et al., 2015). The trouble with vulnerable posts made by these individuals is that trained psychologists and mental health care professionals do not see these messages. Untrained, unaware, and apathetic peers see these posts of at-risk individuals and mock or misunderstand the poster. Cyberbullies, as opposed to caring friends, are usually the first to comment on these types of posts, tearing down individuals, provoking, even encouraging self-harm and/or suicide. The need for online mediation by trained professionals is particularly important with the unmitigated volume of cyberbullying attacks.

Sometimes posts from youth as a cry for help are met by pro-suicide authors offering an escape from all their turmoil with one tidy package of a cyber-suicide pact. Cyber-suicide pacts are made with complete strangers through any type of social media promising that each individual will commit at the same time, so they are not alone (Luxton et al., 2012). While individuals cannot be sure these strangers will follow through with their plan, they accept this guidance from someone they assume knows more than they. Unfortunately, suicide has been romanticized through popular media, with the classic Shakespearean tale of Romeo and Juliet who die for love, as well as the amount of media attention youth suicides bring to individuals. Many individuals are convinced that they will be popular if they kill themselves, at last recognized on social media and society. If met by proper intervention, these types of pacts could be eradicated entirely, affording these potential victims less opportunity to commit suicide.

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Tiffany Snider
English 2010

**Genetically Modified Food:
A Modern Term for Old-Fashioned Husbandry**

How often does the average American consumer really read a nutrition label? The University of Minnesota conducted a survey of 203 participants to measure what people looked for on labels prior to purchasing a product. Coupled with a questionnaire, the participants were synched with an eye-tracking device recording their eye movements at 1,000 times per second. The difference in what the questionnaire revealed compared to the information from the eye-tracker was huge. The study reported, "Thirty-three percent of participants said they 'almost always' looked at a product's calorie content," but the eye-tracking device recorded only 9 percent looked at calorie count (Melnick). There is a movement in the United States to require mandatory labeling of genetically modified foods. If the majority of American consumers don't read food labels currently, why should genetically modified (GM) foods require labels? GM food should not require mandatory labeling.

According to Jagadeesan Premanandh, the Acting Head of the Molecular Biology Unit in the Laboratories Division of the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority, the accepted definition of genetic modification is "any change to the heritable traits of an organism achieved by intentional manipulation" (37). Under this definition, agriculturists have been practicing this type of husbandry for thousands of years. It is well known that farmers have traditionally cross-bred certain types of vegetables or fruits with a similar type of the same species, hoping to spawn a specimen with more desirable traits (Senauer 1). The present-day concern, however, is the modern method used to achieve this same end. In a laboratory, a spliced gene is extracted from a plant and injected into the rDNA of another type of plant to produce a specific characteristic (Rotman 33). For example,

in Ireland, potato blight, a type of water mold, is costly to farmers. Their choices are to apply mass amounts of fungicide or genetically engineer a potato plant that is naturally resistant to the disease. Researchers at Teagasc, Ireland's Agricultural Agency, have genetically modified a potato plant with a blight-resistant gene from a wild potato grown in South America. One portion of the potato field has been genetically engineered; another portion has been sprayed with fungicides. The portion that was genetically engineered has done well in resisting the blight. In the portion sprayed with fungicides, "wilted stems and leaves show that the tubers, half-exposed in the ground, are scarred with black blotches" (Rotman 29).

Some may ask why not just cross breed two types of plants to achieve this same end the old fashioned way? Why do it in a laboratory? Traditional hybridization typically takes up to fifteen years. Genetic engineering of foods typically requires six months for changes to occur (Rotman 31). With an increasing population in an ever hungry world, it seems genetic engineering of foods may be able to help solve the situation (Premanandh 38). However, the question remains, should genetically engineered foods require a label?

The current labeling policy for genetically modified foods in the US is "only if the food has a nutritional or food safety property that is significantly different from what consumers would expect of that food" (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff). An example would include a gene from a peanut, a potential allergen, introduced to a soybean, and would be required to be. Otherwise, the only requirements for labels are the ingredients of the final product, not the ingredients or methods of the manufacturing or processing of the product (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff).

Anyone who has read Upton Sinclair's *"The Jungle"* knows society can thank him for making public the unsanitary conditions of the meatpacking district in Chicago in the early 1900s. Sinclair's work led to some of the first regulations regarding food safety in the United States ("Upton"). Thus, there are advantages to mandatory

labeling requirements. The most obvious benefit is the consumer's right to know (Senauer 1). Labeling allows consumers to freely choose the types of ingredients they put into their bodies (Premanandh 39). Some individuals cite health reasons while others defer to religious reasons for avoiding certain foods. Based on the doctrine of Hinduism, most Hindus avoid all animal and fish products. Additionally, the Quran forbids the Muslim population to eat pork. Without labeling, some individuals may unwittingly break with traditional religious values by consuming something that is forbidden (Premanandh 39). In addition, it appears the majority of American's prefer mandatory labeling (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff). A poll conducted by Thomas Reuters in 2010, indicated nine of ten Americans were in favor of mandatory labeling (Senauer 2).

Another merit of mandatory labeling is currently 64 countries are vested in some form of mandatory labeling. Each country has its own regulation regarding what percentage of a GM ingredient must be present in a food before a label is required. An accepted threshold is 1 percent. The European Union is .09 percent while Japan is 5 percent. The prevailing reason for the differences in percentages is higher costs associated with a lower threshold (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff).

Proponents of mandatory labeling also stipulate the long-term effects of genetically modified foods are unknown. The European Union is using their mandatory labeling as a gauge to determine what long-term effects genetically modified foods may have. Premanandh uses bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or Mad Cow Disease, as an example, stating, "BSE . . . is a typical example in which the impact of beef infected with BSE was not evident for years. Therefore, absence of evidence does not mean evidence of absence, as there is a possibility of time lag between exposure to health or environmental risks and their effects" (39).

While it is true the effects of genetically modified foods are unknown, it remains to be seen if the benefits of

mandatory labeling are worth the costs. From an economic standpoint alone, mandatory labeling would increase food costs up to 30 percent (Premanandh 40). This inflation is not limited to the ink, paper, and labels. According to Byrne, Pendell, and Graff, the cost to the public for monitoring and enforcement would be absorbed by taxpayers. Trade impacts are also of concern. Mandatory labeling may prevent some countries from purchasing product from the US (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff). The USDA reported in 2012, 2,266 metric tons of wheat was produced in the United States; of that, 1,012 metric tons was exported. Bottom line, not only could mandatory labeling affect the cost domestically, it may preclude international exports (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff).

Another argument against mandatory labeling is that GM foods with a label insinuate there could exist negative health effects although none have been detected (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff, N. p.). Consumer ignorance echoes this concern. A poll taken in 1999 by *Time Magazine* reported that 58 percent would not purchase a product labeled “Genetically Modified” (Lilliston 12). This ignorance is a far cry from the facts. In his article “To Label or Not to Label,” Richard Dahl says, “In 2010 the European Commission released an analysis of 50 studies conducted on GE food over the past 25 years and concluded that GE technologies posed no greater risks than conventional breeding technologies” (A360).

Safe and healthy alternatives to mandatory labeling currently exist. Some distributors of non-GM food voluntarily label their foods. Additionally, Certified Organic Foods are not genetically modified, right down to the seeds the items are grown from. The USDA organic standards exclude genetic engineering but do not prohibit other breeding methods such as hybridization (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff).

While the arguments for labeling genetically modified foods are strong, the benefits do not outweigh the costs. Consumers already have options to genetically

modified food. Current labeling regulations require accounting for potential allergens (Byrne, Pendell, and Graff). Studies thus far prove there are no adverse health effects of the consumption of GE foods (Dahl, A360). The economic consequences would be tough to stomach. Mandatory labeling of genetically engineered food would be expensive, confusing, and redundant.

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The Community Watering Trough

Some are overly protective of all of their children. Some learn to relax after their first child. I was the latter. After I had my first son, Kove, I was completely obsessed with making sure everything was clean and sterile so that he did not get sick. I had an elaborate system in place: Huge sanitizer bottles resting next to any table where he would possibly be present, and special soaps for cleaning clothes and bottles. This, of course, was also to alert others to be diligent and sanitize. Naturally, nobody took the hint and would still touch him with their germ-infested hands.

After my second son, Kai, was born, I noticed that I did not care as much. A binky that Kove would have dropped on the ground would have been thrown out like yesterday's trash, but with Kai, I thought, "Well, he's up to date on shots. What the hell?" and wiped it off on my clothes, and went about my day.

I was always told that kids just need to eat dirt; it will build their immunity. I thought it was a silly thing at first, but realized maybe there was something to that. After all, some of my friends who had continued to sanitize and keep a germ-free home had some of the sickest children.

Over the years, as the kids kept coming, I heavily relied on those immunizations working because, let's face it, kids' mouths are like community watering troughs. They use their mouths as a testing device for everything. Is this edible? Is this gross? Is this candy? Simply put, they lick everything. Anything from the grocery cart to surprise food found in random corners of the gas station floor, my personal favorite.

Through it all, my children have not suffered any serious disease from their disgusting behaviors. Though, some children are not as lucky. Some parents continue to keep a germ-free zone, some live like we do, and many others also do not vaccinate their children at all. One has to

question, why there is so much controversy surrounding vaccinations?

Childhood vaccinations have proven to decrease the prevalence of vaccine-preventable diseases. Yet, controversy remains on whether or not the risk of the vaccines themselves outweighs the benefit of immunization. After the knowledge gained from my research, I am convinced that vaccinations are a safe, effective, and necessary way to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases.

Before understanding the complex topic of vaccinations, we must first understand how our bodies react when faced with an infection. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's article "Understanding How Vaccines Work" offers a simple explanation of the cycle of infection and also emphasizes the exact effect of vaccines within our body.

For instance, our body's immune system consists of red and white blood cells. The red blood cells are responsible for oxygenation of our tissues and organs, while the white blood cells fight infection and help build immunity. When bacteria or a virus enters our bodies, our white blood cells—B-lymphocytes, T-lymphocytes, and macrophages—spring into action with specific duties to fight the infection. Macrophages digest the virus or bacteria leaving small antigens behind. Our body then recognizes the antigens as dangerous and force the B-lymphocytes to produce antibodies to attack them. In addition, the T-lymphocytes then attack the already infected cells and leave a small amount of memory cells to remind our body in the future how to fight the specific infection ("Understanding How").

Understanding how our bodies attack infection is an important step in understanding how vaccines work. Simply put, vaccines imitate infection, but do not cause infection. In fact, the imitated infection forces our bodies to produce all of the white blood cells in the same cycle as mentioned previously to create immunity to the virus. Of course, minor

symptoms of the virus it is imitating can be present, but that only means the vaccine is working and our body is building immunity (“Understanding How”).

Building an immunity to infectious disease without experiencing the sometimes fatal and debilitating disease itself is impossible without the support of vaccinations and herd immunity, an indirect protection for non-vaccinated people. Parents are reluctant to vaccinate their children today because many have not seen or understand the debilitating and deadly diseases that flourished not long ago.

To take a case in point, polio was considered one of the most devastating childhood diseases, leaving some with paralysis, deformities of the limbs or death. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s article “Polio Disease—Questions and Answers” states, “Up to about 72 percent of susceptible persons infected with polio have no symptoms. However, infected persons without symptoms can still spread the virus and cause others to develop polio.” Furthermore, polio is transmitted both through stool and oral/nasal secretions of an infected person (“Polio Disease”). To put it bluntly, polio is one of the many diseases that parents are not protecting their children from every time they refuse to vaccinate.

Likewise, bacterial meningitis occurs when a virus spreads through oral/nasal secretions of an infected person and invades one’s spinal cord and brain. In fact, this particular disease begins as simple as an ear, sinus, or upper respiratory infection in children. As a result, permanent brain damage and/or death can occur in a matter of days (“Meningitis”). Although there are other types of meningitis that cannot be prevented, bacterial meningitis is a disease that can be prevented if parents choose to vaccinate their children.

Lastly, measles is a disease characterized by a high fever, sore throat, runny nose, and rash. It can also cause encephalitis, pneumonia, and death. The Mayo Clinic’s article “Measles. Diseases and Conditions” states, “While death rates have been falling worldwide as more children

receive the measles vaccine, the disease still kills more than 100,000 people a year, most under the age of 5” (“Measles”). As parents refuse to vaccinate against this disease, their children could become a part of this statistic. Ultimately, one child is too many to die from such a preventable disease. Perhaps the most alarming information about measles is that it too is spread through nasal/oral secretions and can live on surfaces; however, the signs and symptoms do not usually appear until 10-14 days after infection (“Measles”).

So, what does this all mean? Since these are all highly contagious diseases, when an infected person coughs or sneezes, the infected droplets in the air or surfaces infect others that come in contact. The newly infected people then unknowingly go home and infect their family. In addition, their family then goes grocery shopping and infects other shoppers, etc. This cycle of infection all occurs before anyone even realizes that they are carrying the disease.

Diseases such as measles and polio have declined a tremendous amount since the introduction of vaccines. For example, the article “When Vaccine Misconceptions Jeopardize Public Health” by John W. Epling et al. marks statistical data on the number of cases in the 20th century annual morbidity compared to the year 2010. The number of measles reported in the 20th century decreased from 530,217 people compared to 63 cases reported in 2010. Likewise, paralytic polio decreased from 16,316 to 0 cases in 2010 (E5). In addition, the authors state, “It is estimated that just nine of the routinely recommended vaccines prevent 42,000 deaths and 20 million cases of disease in every birth cohort” (E1). The decrease in these highly infectious diseases prove that vaccines, coupled with herd immunity, have made an outstanding impact in the reduction of disease (Epling et al. E1-E7).

For instance, “Vaccine Herd Effect” by Tae Hyong Kim, Jennie Johnstone, and Mark Loeb emphasizes that herd immunity is a very important element to aid in the destruction of vaccine-preventable disease. The authors

believe the idea to herd immunity is that if most of the population is vaccinated, those people indirectly protect the ones who cannot receive vaccinations, such as immunocompromised people. Kim, Johnstone and Loeb emphasize that herd immunity played a big role, including a high uptake of vaccine, for the eradication of smallpox in 1977 (683-689).

Many organizations have tried to implement a high uptake of vaccines in order to achieve the herd effect. For example, all school-aged children have to show complete vaccination records in order to attend school. Of course, there are exceptions, but those exceptions must be valid and properly documented. That is where the herd effect comes into play. Those children who are not immunized become protected by the children who are.

Likewise, every year between October and April, all employees and volunteers at the hospital are encouraged to get a flu shot. Of course, employees can sign a declination form, but those employees who sign are mandated to wear masks for the six months of flu season. The idea is clear that we will protect our already fragile patients with a high uptake of vaccine to prevent any further illness. Sadly, more and more masks are becoming visible for people who have refused.

With all the knowledge we have come to acquire about the positive effects that vaccines have for not only ourselves but for our communities, why are so many employees, volunteers and parents refusing to immunize?

Perhaps one of the most talked about reasons that parents refuse vaccine for their children is the association with vaccines to autism. Some parents believe that their child was diagnosed with autism around the same time that they were immunized, which leads them to believe they must be related. To further fuel the belief of the relationship between the two, a study published in 1998 by Andrew Wakefield and 12 other colleagues indicated they found a biological mechanism between the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine and autism (DeStefano and Chen 832).

Steve Calandrillo, author of “Vanishing Vaccinations: Why are So Many Americans Opting Out of Vaccinating Their Children?” believes that the main reasons parents opt out of vaccinations is because of the potential link with autism, religious and/or philosophical beliefs, and the internet. Calandrillo emphasizes that as parents look for answers while searching the internet, there are many websites that show that the vaccines themselves are dangerous (353).

Likewise, Yvonne Maldonado, author of “Current Controversies in Vaccination,” believes that some changes to vaccines, such as the removal of thimerosal, a mercury-based ingredient placed into many vaccines to preserve and prevent contamination of the medication, has created increased anxiety of the potential harmful effects of the vaccines themselves (Maldonado). Indeed there are many reasons why both parents and adults decide not to vaccinate.

On the other hand, some of the reasons why we should not vaccinate ourselves or our children have no valid data to support their claim. For example, the article “Lancet Retracts MMR Paper after GMC finds Andrew Wakefield Guilty of Dishonesty” by Clare Dyer emphasizes that Andrew Wakefield’s paper linking autism to vaccine has been found fraudulent by the UK General Medical Council. Dyer states:

The regulatory body held that Dr. Wakefield abused his position, subjected children to intrusive procedures such as lumbar puncture and colonoscopy that were not clinically indicated, carried out research that breached the conditions of ethics committee approval, and brought the medical profession into disrepute. (281)

In other words, Wakefield’s whole study on the link between autism and the MMR vaccine was both unethical and incorrect. Dyer suggests that Wakefield’s study initiated a massive health crisis in the UK that has never fully recovered, as vaccinations have rapidly declined, and the

outbreak of measles has substantially increased (281). Furthermore, Dyer reports that Wakefield had failed to disclose that he received funding from a company that was pursuing legal action against the drug manufacturer (281).

To further support that there is no link between autism and vaccinations, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention conducted a study in 2013 to look at whether or not the number of antigens from vaccines increased, decreased, or stayed the same within the child's first two years of life ("Vaccines"). The study exhibited that the number of antigens present was the same between children with autism and without autism. In short, the study proves that vaccines do not cause autism ("Vaccines").

Similarly, in "Autism and Measles-Mumps-Rubella Vaccination: Controversy Laid to Rest?" Frank DeStefano and Robert T. Chen emphasize that the most thorough study on the association between MMR and vaccination conducted by Taylor and colleagues showed no evidence to support any association between vaccine and autism. DeStefano and Chen state:

The authors first showed that the known number of ASD (autism spectrum disorder) cases has been increasing since 1979 and there was no sharp increase after the introduction of MMR vaccine in 1988. Secondly, they found that patients vaccinated before 18 months of age had similar ages at diagnosis as did patients who had been vaccinated after 18 months or not vaccinated, indicating that vaccination does not result in earlier expression of autistic characteristics. Thirdly, they showed that at age 2 years the MMR vaccination coverage among the patients with ASD was nearly identical to the coverage in children in the same birth cohorts in the whole district, providing evidence of an overall lack of association with vaccination. (833)

To put it bluntly, vaccines do not cause autism. Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics and a committee of the Institute of Medicine came to a similar

conclusion. Actually, DeStefano and Chen believe that autism is a genetic defect that occurs in utero, present at birth and only recognized as the child begins to communicate (831-837).

Today, most of us have heard at some point or another that vaccines cause autism and are not safe. But the fact of the matter is, the only published study linking vaccines to autism was declared incorrect, yet many do not know that. Some thrive on the idea that vaccines, in general, are dangerous. However, vaccines are surrounded by a plethora of misinformation.

For instance, some believe that the risk from disease is lower than the risk from vaccines. However, Maldonado provides statistical data reproduced from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's adverse events per persons with disease and noted that the risk from the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine are as follows: Risk from measles—pneumonia: 1 in 20, encephalitis: 1 in 2,000, death: 1 in 3,000. Risk from mumps—encephalitis: 1 in 300. Risk from rubella—congenital rubella syndrome: 1 in 4 (if woman infected during first trimester). Risk from the MMR vaccine—encephalitis or severe allergic reaction: 1 in 1,000,000 (Maldonado). To put it bluntly, the risk from disease is far superior to the risk of vaccine.

Another example of misunderstood information concerns the ingredient thimerosal. Many believe this preservative in vaccines is more dangerous than the disease from which it is protecting for their young children, despite the fact that babies are exposed to mercury through milk, breast milk, and seafood ("Parents' Guide"). Consequently, thimerosal was removed from all vaccines except for some flu vaccines between 1999 and 2001 before the study was done in 2004 by the Institute of Medicine deeming thimerosal as safe ("Vaccines").

The safety of vaccines has been questioned by many; however, vaccine safety has rigorous systems in place. For example, The Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, the Vaccine Safety Datalink, and the Clinical

Immunization Safety Assessment Network are all systems working together in their own functions to ensure the safety of vaccines. These systems, of course, are placed after the vaccines have been reviewed through the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research at the US Food and Drug Administration (Epling et al. E1-E7).

Of course, there is always risk when taking any medication, but we need to evaluate whether the benefit is worth the risk of the medication. To further study whether vaccines are safe, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a “Parents’ Guide to Childhood Immunizations.” The article emphasizes that thousands of studies are continuously being done for potential risk factors that lead to many diseases such as cancer, heart attack, and stroke. In short, in over 50 years of experience with vaccines, there have never been any risk factors linked to vaccines thus far (“Parents’ Guide”).

In sum, although there are minor, short-term risks involved, as with any medication, the benefits of vaccinations are far superior to the diseases in which they prevent. The controversy surrounding the risk of vaccines is heightened by much misleading and misunderstood information. The fact is, while trying to find reasons why we should not vaccinate ourselves or our children, I could not find any scholarly or credible sources that proved that we should not vaccinate. In fact, all of the sources that I could find indicate that vaccination is the only way to prevent the transmission of these debilitating and deadly diseases.

So, as our children’s mouths keep going to that community watering trough, we can rest a little easier knowing they have some protection provided. Some say a dog’s mouth is cleaner than a human’s. I can attest to that as my dog spots a dirty, disregarded binky in a random field and passes it by, while Kai, who is now seven, picks it up and sucks on it for a picture, laughing hysterically. Kids are disgusting! There is no way to prevent them from doing the things that they do, no matter how hard we try. Sometimes we have to throw in the towel and hope for the best. So it is

with vaccines. Our generation needs to protect the lives of our children and their grandchildren thereafter. One child is too many to be inflicted with a vaccine-preventable disease.

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Amy Walski
English 2010

Testing What?

As high school students begin preparing for higher education and making decisions in regard to their academic futures, many factors play a role in where they will ultimately decide to attend college. Often, students become concerned with being admitted to the school of their choice and find it necessary to put a large effort into maintaining a high GPA and doing well on the standardized tests that have become an integral part of the college admissions process.

During my junior year of high school, I remember the huge amount of pressure that I felt to do well on the ACT. My main focus at this time was earning a score that was well above average in order to be qualified for the highly competitive academic scholarships that colleges had to offer. I spent a few months prior to taking the exam taking practice tests and, in the end, did very well on the exam. I was easily accepted into all of the colleges to which I applied and received very large scholarship offers from nearly every one. While I do credit part of receiving a high score to my preparation, I also accept that I have always been good at taking tests, and even standardized tests such as the ACT, and have never felt that I was in any way more intelligent or capable than others when it came to academics.

Although getting accepted into the colleges of my choice was never a concern for me, I witnessed many of my peers struggling with the ACT, and putting lots of time and effort into preparing for and even retaking the test so they would have a chance at getting into the colleges that they wanted to attend. I considered all of these people to be highly intelligent, and they all did well in school overall, but some of them simply struggled when it came to taking tests. This experience opened my eyes to the unfairness of the amount of focus that is put on standardized testing in the

college admissions process, and how it may not be an accurate measure of a student's intelligence or ability,

From a practical standpoint, standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT are an easy way for college admissions offices to quickly sort through applicants and develop standards which applicants must meet before they can be admitted to that institution. By setting clear minimum requirements, colleges can more easily sort through which students they choose to admit before looking deeper into other factors. Tests like these allow admissions offices to put a concrete numerical value on the strength and quality of a student's application so that students can be universally measured against one another.

Standardized tests such as the ACT and SAT have been developed as a way to predict how well students will do in college. Both have been established using specific standards in testing practice in an effort to be a fair and accurate measure of academic ability, with the SAT measuring aptitude and the ACT measuring achievement and knowledge (ACT). Since these tests are recognized by all universities in the United States, they provide a universal system of measuring academic ability and achievement in a way that other methods could not. While high school GPA is taken into consideration in the college admissions process, one view is that differences among grading policies does not allow for a fair distinction between students coming from different backgrounds. Wayne Camara, senior vice president of research for ACT, said, "More information is always better in admissions decisions . . . Another reason why tests are also important is to ensure that grade inflation is held at bay" (qtd. in Westervelt). Standardized testing provides a way for colleges and universities to account for these differences in grading policy.

Although standardized test scores are used by college admissions offices as a predictor of college GPA, they may not be the best method for making this prediction. A number of studies have found that GPA earned in high school is actually a stronger predictor of future college

success, despite the possibility of grade inflation and differences in grading criteria among high schools across the country. One study examined how both SAT scores and high school GPA correlated with college GPA, and which of these was a better predictor of how well a student would perform in college. While there was a direct correlation between the standardized test scores and college GPA, there was an even stronger relationship between high school and college GPA. Overall, this study found that “College and university GPAs closely track high school GPAs, despite wide variations in testing” (Hiss 3). A similar study also found that high school GPA was the strongest predictor of both college GPA and college graduation (Geiser 12).

One factor that plays a major role in the differences in the reliability of test scores and high school GPA at predicting college GPA is that pure testing ability is something separate from ability to do well in school overall. While some students may generally do well in school but struggle when it comes down to a single test, others excel at taking tests but lack the motivation to apply themselves at school. A huge aspect of success in school is the amount of effort that is put in. If a student has done well throughout their high school career, chances are he or she not only has the ability to do well, but also the motivation. As former dean of admissions at Bates College William Hiss put it, “Human intelligence is so multifaceted, so complex, so varied, that no standardized testing system can be expected to capture it.” He goes on to say that GPA is “highly predictive, in contrast to what they do in three or four hours on a particular Saturday morning in a testing room” (qtd. in Westervelt). GPA serves as a testament to a student’s dedication to his or her education, while test scores are more a measure of testing ability.

Due to multiple factors, students generally can increase their scores by retaking tests such as the SAT and ACT. One study showed that on average, students who retook the SAT increased their math scores by 16 points and their verbal scores by 13 points (Vigdor 11). While

scores usually do not increase by a significant amount, even small improvements can have an impact on college applications. This same study proposed a number of different explanations for this outcome, one of which proposed that this increase may be because students learn the test format and become familiar with the type of questions they can expect to see on the exams (Vigdor 11). As long as students can pay the testing fee for either the ACT or SAT, they can retake their test and have the opportunity to increase their scores. After taking these tests multiple times, students even have the ability to pick out and send their best test scores to the colleges of their choice.

By primarily focusing on one aspect of a potential student's application, college admissions offices do not always get a clear picture of that student's academic ability. While the ACT and SAT were developed to be a fair and clear indication of both a student's academic achievement and aptitude, they can be prepared for and learned just like any other test. Private test preparation can increase a student's score but can also be very expensive. In fact, preparation for these tests make up a \$2 billion industry in the United States annually, so students can have the chance to look as good as possible on their applications (Westervelt).

Multiple studies have been conducted to determine the effect that test coaching has on students' scores. One indicated that formal test preparation increased students' SAT scores by an average of 10-20 points on the math portion of the exam, and 5-10 points on the reading portion (Briggs 12). Again, while this increase is small, it can be significant enough to make an impact on a student's admission into a university. There are multiple methods of test preparation, with some vigorous methods costing \$100-200 per hour for private tutoring, or over \$1,000 for a complete test preparation course (Briggs 21). This clearly puts the more financially privileged students at an advantage

over those who don't have the ability or resources to invest in test preparation.

By focusing their efforts on doing well on these tests, students can create an image of their academic abilities that they wish to portray to the schools they are applying to. In both test preparation and retakes, financial factors play a big role. The ability for students to extensively prepare for and retake tests means that test results are more dependent on a student's resources than his or her actual academic ability that these tests were designed to measure. When this becomes a factor in test-taking, discrimination and differences in scores based on socioeconomic status also come into play. One study found that there was a significant relationship between SAT scores and socioeconomic status and stated that: "the source of the SES-SAT relationship is likely due to some combination of educational opportunity, school quality, peer effects, and other social factors" (Sackett 7). When looking at multiple factors and scores on standardized tests, scores are directly proportional to the resources, in terms of time and money put into them. Students who are more financially privileged are at a clear advantage over those who don't have the ability or resources to invest in test preparation or retakes.

The use of standardized test scores in the college admissions process is not necessarily always a bad practice. Weber State University, being open enrollment, does not require the submission of any standardized test scores with applications. Even when these are submitted, they are primarily used to determine placement in math and English courses, and not to determine whether or not a student is admitted to the university. In this practice, testing scores are an accurate and reliable method of testing a student's ability in different areas. As Scott Teichert, director of admissions at Weber State put it, "while there is some merit to the debate of test bias, I feel that ACT scores do reflect competencies and subject matter comprehension and mastery." When these test scores are used to benefit students by placing them in the courses that will be the best

fit for them, they are helping students in the process of receiving a higher education, as opposed to restricting them from those opportunities.

The use of standardized test scores in the college admissions process has been widely practiced for many years in nearly every college and university in the United States. While standardized tests have historically been a useful tool in the college admissions process, they may not be a reliable predictor of future college success, and can be misused by admissions offices and students alike. Despite the fact that this has become a norm or standard way of practice, placing such a high value on these test scores may be an unethical practice. Even as someone who greatly benefited from the use of standardized tests, I believe that they are not an accurate measure of academic ability and do not necessarily indicate how well students will do in their academic careers. The flaws in this system become apparent when looking at the fact that scores can be almost manipulated by students who have the ability put lots of time and resources into preparing for this single test, and how college admissions offices often place such high stakes on these scores. Because of these factors, the practice of placing such a high value on standardized test scores in the college admissions process is discriminatory and an inaccurate measure of ability and predictor of college success.

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Hovering Helicopter Parents: Are They Bad For Their Children?

“Make sure your helmet is fastened. Do you have everything? You are meeting up with Sydney and Riley by the church, right?” I questioned my daughter as she was hopping on her bike to go to school.

“Mooooom, you heard my helmet strap snap, and you helped me get my backpack together. Of course I have everything!” My daughter rolled her eyes at me. Was I being overbearing?

Again I questioned my daughter, “You are meeting up with Sydney and Riley, right?” My daughter looked at me and then let her head drop. She seemed exhausted from my questioning.

“Actually Mom, Sydney and Riley aren’t riding bikes today. I’m riding by myself, and I will be fine. I know the way. I know the rules. I have my cell phone. I am almost eleven years old!”

Maybe I was being a little tyrannical. “Are you sure you will be ok?”

“Mom, I will be fine!”

As I let my 10-year-old ride away, I thought to myself, “I really am overdoing it.” My daughter was right. She is almost 11 years old. When I was 11 years old, I was not only taking care of myself, but I was taking care of other people’s children. At this point, I could barely let my child make a sandwich, let alone have her take care of another person’s child. What had happened to me? How did I get to be so overprotective and anxious?

After that day, I decided to give my daughter more space. She was perfectly capable of doing so much more than I had previously allowed. If she was ever going to be a self-reliant, productive human being, I needed to allow her to learn the skills necessary to do that. That was the day I

started my journey as a recovering, hovering, helicopter parent.

Some parents might say that I was parenting exactly the way that I should have been, or that I was just being concerned for the welfare of my child. I disagree. Instead of helping my child to succeed, my hovering might have been setting her up for possible failure. While I came to the realization that my daughter needed space to develop her autonomy, not every hovering parent comes to that realization. Helicopter parents often create more harm for their children than good. Hovering can unintentionally create children and, eventually, adults who lack coping skills and personal autonomy (Firestone 2).

The expression “helicopter parent” has been floating around since 1969 when a book called *Between Parent and Teenager* was released. This book spotlighted a teenager who characterized his mother as a hovering helicopter watching over him. Since that time, many people have referred to this type of parenting as the parent who is waiting to swoop in to rescue his or her child whenever needed. This term is especially common among many college administrators who find that parents are even hovering on campus to take care of their emerging adult whenever possible (Morin 1). It wasn’t until recent years that academic and scientific research has flown onto the parenting scene, confirming what media had previously claimed about helicopter parenting. Lara M. Padilla-Walker and Larry J. Nelson from the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University have performed solid research to “examine the relations between parenting and other forms of parental control during emerging adulthood to determine if helicopter parenting is a distinct form of parental control” (Padilla-Walker et al. 1177). In other words, Padilla-Walker and Nelson wanted to find out if helicopter parenting is a form of parental control, if it is truly its own style of parenting, and how it compares to other forms of parenting.

Through surveying emerging adults from four different universities and their own parents, Padilla-Walker

and Nelson were able to conclude that helicopter parenting is its own discrete form of parenting. On the positive side of helicopter parenting, Padilla-Walker and Nelson found that hovering parents tend to be involved in their children's lives. The parents are a source of kindness and counsel to their children. On the negative side, they found that hovering parents become a problem when their children are not allowed to make decisions or live life independently. These students have lower self-esteem, identity confusion, and less school engagement (1177). While this research shows some possible benefits to helicopter parenting, it definitely shows the harm that can unintentionally take place. I can't imagine a loving parent who would ever set out to foster low self-esteem or a lack of school engagement in their child.

In Sharon Jayson's article, "Do Helicopter Parents Help or Harm the Kids," Jayson interviews Padilla-Walker and shares some of Padilla-Walker's findings. While talking about helicopter parents Padilla-Walker states:

They're involved in their children's lives just not appropriately . . . They don't value having their children make their own decisions. They [the children] may already be less engaged in school, so the parent is stepping in to try to help, or it could be parents have hovered so long that the child is not taking their own initiative . . . I don't want parents to get the message not to be involved in their children's lives at this age. They are very much needed. The key is, is it joint decision making, or is it the parent doing it? (Jayson 1)

In other words, it is important for parents to be involved in their children's lives. However, parents need to make sure they are not making decisions for their children. Both the parent and the child should be involved in the decision-making process. Doing this will help improve the odds of the child growing up with a sense of autonomy and support (Jayson 1).

So how does helicopter parenting really affect young children? In her article, “Tiger Moms, Get Off Your Hovering Helicopters,” Positive Parenting Expert Ivana Cortes claims, “While parents may have the best of intentions, their frantic efforts to shepherd their children to happiness and success are making kids anxious and depressed” (2). Cortes is expressing that parents are not allowing their children to make mistakes and be kids. Just like the example of me and my daughter; I meant well trying to protect my daughter from the dangers of biking to school alone. However, this was very frustrating to my daughter, and it was starting to take a toll on her and our relationship. If I never allow my daughter the chance to venture out on her own, how will she ever be able to function as an adult in daily life?

Cortes cites a study executed by John Hopkins University. In this study,

... hyperparenting was more closely related to increased anxiety in children than the mental health of the parent or parental rejection. In turn, elevated anxiety (in children and adults) is linked to depression and behavioral issues. Even toddlers with moms who are too directive in play are more aggressive and more likely to throw toys. The opposite also is true: moms who are less intrusive tend to have happier children. (2)

These findings mean that children who have hovering parents are more likely to experience depression and anxiety. The children don't have positive coping skills and, as a result, act out in negative ways (Cortes 2). While kindness and counsel are important, what good will they do if a child can't cope with life on a daily basis? How will this affect these children as they grow up and enter the stage of emerging adulthood?

According to the article, “Time Orientation and Identity Formation: Long-Term Longitudinal Dynamics in Emerging Adulthood,” emerging adulthood is a time of self-exploration and a time when most people truly form

their personal identity (Shirai et al. 274). Taking this into account, what happens when mom swoops in to make every decision and solve every problem for her emerging adult? In the recent research “Helicopter Parenting: The Effect of an Overbearing Caregiving Style on Peer Attachment and Self-Efficacy,” researchers found the answer to this question. Researchers looked at how helicopter parenting is associated with self-efficacy and peer relationships among 190 undergraduate students, ages 16 to 28 years. They observed that, “Perceptions of helicopter parenting were associated with low general self-efficacy and poor peer attachment. Students who perceived their parents as intrusive felt a diminished capacity to perform or accomplish tasks. Helicopter parenting was also associated with mistrust in peers, feeling alienated from peers, and poor peer communication” (van Ingen, et al. 1).

If this is the case, how are emerging adults going to form their own identity? How are they going to have successful working relationships, or even romantic relationships? The research goes on to say, “One can imagine the case of a college student who knows how to communicate very well with a peer group and yet is simply conforming to group norms and feels unable to express his or her unique thoughts and feelings. Not only does this student need education on the mechanics of how to communicate clearly, but he or she needs opportunities to explore the boundaries between self-realization and group belonging” (van Ingen, et al. 8). In stating these results, researchers are bringing up a huge concern for emerging adults. It seems that because of their hovering parents, emerging adults are conforming to those around them instead of thinking and feeling for themselves. This research makes it clear that autonomy and life skills need to be taught or these emerging adults may suffer.

In addition to the difficulties of identifying who they are and building relationships with others, emerging adults may also suffer from anxiety, depression, and even drug abuse. The research article “Does ‘Hovering’ Matter?

Helicopter parenting and Its Effect on Well-Being” states, “In fact, it does appear that those students who claim that their parents engage in helicopter parenting do feel more negatively about themselves, in that they have lower levels of overall well-being . . . Children of perceived helicopter parents are also more apt to be medicated for anxiety and/or depression. They are also more likely to take pain pills without a prescription” (Lemoyne and Buchanan 399). Again, it is important for parents to love and be involved in their children’s lives, but what parent wants to see his or her child depressed, anxious, or addicted to drugs? These negative effects of helicopter parenting seem to outweigh the positive aspects of helicopter parenting. This data suggests that parents need to learn how to be decision-making partners with their children rather than overbearing tyrants.

As stated earlier, I came to the realization that my daughter needed space. I didn’t know that helicopter parenting could be harmful. Luckily, I have a daughter who speaks her mind and helped me realize that I was hovering. Many parents only realize the effects of hovering once their children are older and the negative outcomes have already manifest (Firestone 2). Because of this, it is important for all parents to be educated about parental hovering. It’s also important for parents to know where to draw the line between being involved and loving, or being overbearing and domineering.

In her article “The Hidden Dangers of Helicopter Parenting,” Dr. Michele Borba expresses her belief that if parents keep hovering, children will not know how to be self-sustaining (Borba). She expresses her concern about emerging adults when she says,

If we’re always in Black Hawk Mode, hovering, rescuing, picking up the pieces for our kids, we’re actually setting them up for not only the inability to handle life but also depression, anxiety, and dropping out (and wanting to come back to live with us . . . which they are doing by the droves).

Let's lower our flaps. Let's help our kids handle life. Let's start parenting our kids so they can cope, pick themselves up and start all over again after a setback, and let's help them do so without us. (2)

I wish that I could share Borba's message with all parents. I also wish that I had studied this information when my daughter was three rather than eleven. I'm happy to report that my daughter is a much happier child now that we work together to foster her autonomy. These days when I watch my daughter ride off to school, I know that I'm helping her to be a productive, independent individual. I know that I'm helping my daughter gain the personal autonomy and coping skills that will assist her throughout her life.

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